



# Nibbāna - The Mind Stilled

Volume - III

Bhikkhu K. Ñānananda



# **Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled**

**Volume III  
(Sermons 11 – 15)**

by

**Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda**

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*Dedicated to my Upajjhāya*  
*the late venerable*  
***Mātara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera***  
*of Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya*  
*Sri Lanka*



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## Abbreviations

A	Aṅguttara Nikāya
As	Atthasālinī (comy on Dhammasaṅgani)
It	Itivuttaka
Ud	Udāna
Ud-a	Paramatthadīpanī (comy on Ud)
Ja	Jātaka
Th	Theragāthā
Th-a	Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā
Thī	Therīgāthā
D	Dīgha Nikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
Dhp-a	Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā
Nett	Nettippakarana
Nid I	Mahāniddeśa
Nid II	Cūlaniddeśa
Patis	Patisambhidhāmagga
Pet	Peṭakopadesa
Pj I	Paramatthajotikā (comy on Khp)
Pj II	Paramatthajotikā (comy on Sn)
Ps	Papañcasūdanī (comy on M)
M	Majjhima Nikāya
Mil	Milindapañha
Mp	Manorathapūranī (comy on A)
Vibh-a	Sammohavibidānī
Vin	Vinaya
Vism	Visuddhimagga
S	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
Spk	Sāratthappakāsinī (comy on S)
Sv	Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (comy on D)

(Unless otherwise specified, references are given according to volume and page number of the PTS edition, and in the case of Dhp, Sn, Th and Thī according to the verse number of the PTS edition)



## About the Author

Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda, was born in 1940 to a family of Buddhist parents in Galle, Sri Lanka. He received his school education at Mahinda College, Galle, where he imbibed the true Buddhist values. In 1962 he graduated from the University of Peradeniya and served as an Assistant Lecturer in Pali at the same University for a brief period. He renounced his post in 1967 to enter the Order of Buddhist monks at Island Hermitage, Dodanduwa.

Already during the first phase of his life as a monk at Island Hermitage, Ven. Ñāṇananda had written four books which were published by the Buddhist Publication Society in Kandy under the titles.

- 1) Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought
- 2) Saṃyutta Nikāya – An Anthology (Part II)
- 3) Ideal Solitude
- 4) The Magic of the Mind

Then in 1972 he left Island Hermitage for Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya, where he came under the tutelage of the late Ven. Mātara Srī Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, a veteran teacher of Insight Meditation. The association of these two eminent disciples of the Buddha in a teacher-pupil relationship for about two decades, heralded a new era in the propagation of Dhamma through instructive books on Buddhist Meditation.

The signal contribution of this long association, however, was the set of 33 sermons on Nibbāna delivered by Ven. Ñāṇananda to his fellow resident monks at the invitation of the venerable Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, during the period – August 1988 to January 1991. Inspired by these sermons, a group of lay enthusiasts initiated a Dhamma Publication Trust (D.G.M.B.) at the Public Trustee's Department to bring out the sermons in book

form. The noble Dhammadāna aspiration of Ven. Ñāṇananda to give all books free to the readers provided an opportunity to the Buddhist public to contribute towards the publication of his books. This remarkable step had a spiritual dimension in reaffirming the age-old Buddhist values attached to Dhammadāna, fast eroding before the hungry waves of commercialization. It has proved its worth by creating a healthy cultural atmosphere in which the readers shared the Dhamma-gift with others, thus moulding the links of salutary friendship (‘Kalyāṇa mittatā’) indispensable for the continuity of the Buddha Sāsana.

We are already convinced of the immense potentialities of this magnanimous venture, having witnessed the extraordinary response of the Buddhist public in sending their contributions to the Trust to enable the publication of books. Though usually the names of donors are shown at the end of each publication, some donations – even sizeable ones – are conspicuous by their anonymity. This exemplary trait is symbolic of the implicit confidence of the donor in the Trust.

Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Sadaham Senasun Bhāraya (K.N.S.S.B) is bearing the burden of publication of Ven. Ñāṇananda's sermons and writings, while making available this Dhammadāna to a wider global audience through the new electronic technology. Recorded sermons on C.D.'s are also being issued free as Dhammadāna by this Trust, while making available this Dhamma gift free through the internet.

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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](http://www.seeingthroughthenet.net) and the social networking site [www.facebook.com/seeingthrough](http://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

‘*Nibbāna*’ - the ultimate goal of the Buddhist, has been variously understood and interpreted in the history of Buddhist thought. One who earnestly takes up the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path for the attainment of this goal, might sometimes be dismayed to find this medley of views confronting him. Right View, as the first factor of that path, has always to be in the vanguard in one’s practice. In the interests of this Right View, which one has to progressively ‘straighten-up’, a need for clarification before purification might sometimes be strongly felt. It was in such a context that the present series of 33 sermons on *Nibbāna* came to be delivered.

The invitation for this series of sermons came from my revered teacher, the late Venerable Matara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, who was the resident meditation teacher of Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya Meditation Centre. Under his inspiring patronage these sermons were delivered once every fortnight before the group of resident monks of Nissarana Vanaya, during the period 12.08.1988 - 30.01.1991. The sermons, which were originally circulated on cassettes, began issuing in book-form only in 1997, when the first volume of the Sinhala series titled ‘*Nivane Niveema*’ came out, published by the ‘*Dharma Grantha Mudrana Bhāraya*’ (Dhamma Publications Trust) setup for the purpose in the Department of the Public Trustee, Sri Lanka. The series is scheduled to comprise 11 volumes, of which so far 9 have come out. The entire series is for free distribution as ‘*Dhamma dāna*’-‘the gift of truth that excels all other gifts’. The sister series to come out in English will comprise 7 volumes of 5 sermons each, which will likewise be strictly for free distribution since *Dhamma* is price-less.

In these sermons I have attempted to trace the original meaning and significance of the Pali term *Nibbāna* (Skt. *Nirvāna*) based on the evidence from the discourses of the Pali Canon. This

led to a detailed analysis and a re-appraisal of some of the most controversial *suttas* on *Nibbāna* often quoted by scholars in support of their interpretations. The findings, however, were not presented as a dry scholastic exposition of mere academic interest. Since the sermons were addressed to a meditative audience keen on realizing *Nibbāna*, edifying similes, metaphors and illustrations had their place in the discussion. The gamut of 33 sermons afforded sufficient scope for dealing with almost all the salient teachings in Buddhism from a practical point of view.

The present translation, in so far as it is faithful to the original, will reflect the same pragmatic outlook. While the findings could be of interest even to the scholar bent on theorizing on *Nibbāna*, it is hoped that the mode of presentation will have a special appeal for those who are keen on realizing it.

I would like to follow up these few prefatory remarks with due acknowledgements to all those who gave their help and encouragement for bringing out this translation:

To venerable Anālayo for transcribing the tape recorded translations and the meticulous care and patience with which he has provided references to the P.T.S. editions.

To Mr. U. Mapa, presently the Ambassador for Sri Lanka in Myanmar, for his yeoman service in taking the necessary steps to establish the Dhamma Publications Trust in his former capacity as the Public Trustee of Sri Lanka.

To Mr. G.T.Bandara, Director, Royal Institute, 191, Havelock Road, Colombo 5, for taking the lead in this Dhammadana movement with his initial donation and for his devoted services as the ‘Settler’ of the Trust.

To Mrs. Yukie Sirimane for making available this translation as well as our other publications to the world through the Internet under a special web site [www.beyondthenet.net](http://www.beyondthenet.net)

And last but not least-

To, Mr. Hideo Chihashi, Director, Green Hill Meditation Institute, Tokyo, Japan, and to his group of relatives, friends and pupils for their munificence in sponsoring the publication of the first volume of ‘Nibbāna – The mind stilled’.

‘Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ’  
‘Nibbana is the supreme bliss’

– Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

Pothgulgala Aranyaya  
‘Pahankanuwa’  
Kandegedara  
Devalegama  
Sri Lanka  
August 2002 (B.E.2546)

# **Sermon - 11**

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho  
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*<sup>1</sup>

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction". With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks.

This is the eleventh sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*. In our last sermon, we tried to explain that contact arises dependent on name-and-form, because form gets a verbal impression by the naming quality in name, and name gets a resistance-impression by the striking quality in form. In the context of this *Dhamma*, contact, properly so-called, is a combination of these two, namely verbal impression and resistance-impression.

We also happened to mention the other day a new etymological explanation given by the Buddha to the word *rūpa*, quoting the relevant passage from the *Khajjanīyasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. He has defined the form group with reference to ‘affectation’: *Ruppatīti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā rūpan’ti vuccati.*<sup>2</sup> "It is affected, monks, that is why it is called form. By what is it affected? By cold, heat, hunger, thirst, and the sting of gadflies, mosquitoes and the like."

While analysing the implications of this ‘being affected’, we mentioned that the form group could be compared to a wound. According to the commentarial exegesis, too, *ruppati* means to be adversely affected, to be afflicted, to come into conflict with, to be diseased and displeased. These are reminiscent of the responses usually associated with the person who has an easy lacerable wound. To say that a *paṭighasamphassa* arises because of this lacerable quality is therefore very apt.



The primary sense of the word *paṭigha* is ‘striking against’. Perception of form arises as a result of an attempt to understand through the factors on the name side this particular striking against, which resembles the laceration of a wound. This perception of form, which follows in the wake of the feeling that arises when something strikes against form, is like the groping of a blind man in the dark. Generally, the worldling is in the habit of staring at the form that comes within his grasp, to ascertain its true nature. Likewise, he touches the form he sees with his eyes to verify it. As the saying goes: ‘Seeing is believing, but touch is the real thing’.

But both these attempts are like the gropings of a blind man. The worldling is unable to get rid of his delusion completely by either of these methods. It is because he is accustomed to draw conclusions under the influence of his perception of the compact, *ghanasaññā*.

The fact that the two extreme views of existence and non-existence are also the outcome of this perception of the compact in regard to form, is borne out by the following two lines of the verse we quoted from the *Kalahavivādasutta* in our previous sermon. *Rūpesu disvā vibhavaṃ bhavañca, vinicchayaṃ kurute jantu loke*.<sup>3</sup> "Having seen the existence and destruction of material forms, a man in this world comes to a conclusion."

The worldling has the idea that material forms have an absolute existence. This idea is the result of his perception of form. It is a perception arising out of his impression of that ‘striking against’. Whatever the level of this perception of form be, it is not better than the impression of a blind man. The two extreme views of absolute existence and non-existence in the world are based on this kind of impression.

Various types of views and opinions current in the world regarding material forms and matter in general, are the outcome of the notion that they are absolutely real. There is a tendency in the worldling to presume that what he grasps with his hands and sees with his eyes exists absolutely. So a thing is said to exist for some length of time, before it gets destroyed. The logical conclusion, then, is that all things in the world exist absolutely and that at some point of time they get absolutely destroyed. This is how the two extreme views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence have arisen in this

world. This is the outcome of a perception of form, which is tantamount to a pursuit of a mirage. It is an illusion.

The Buddha has declared, in the *Jaṭāsutta*, that where name-and-form as well as resistance and perception of form are cut off and surcease, there the entire *saṃsāric* problem, which amounts to a tangle within and a tangle without, is also conclusively solved.<sup>4</sup> That this is so could be inferred to some extent from what we have discussed so far.

*Nāma* and *rūpa*, as well as *paṭigha-* and *rūpasaññā*, are highly significant terms. *Paṭigha-* and *rūpasaññā* are equivalent to *paṭigha-samphassa* and *adhivacanasamphassa* respectively. Now as to this perception of form, it is basically conditioned by contact. That is why the *Kalahavivādasutta* states that contact is the cause of the two views of existence and non-existence.

In this *Kalahavivādasutta* one finds a series of questions and answers going deeper and deeper into the analysis of contact, step by step. The question *phasso nu lokasmim kutonidāno*, "what is the cause of contact in this world?"; gets the answer *nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso*, "dependent on name-and-form is contact".<sup>5</sup> The next question is: *Kismim vibhūte na phussanti phassā*, "in the absence of what, do contacts not bring about contact", or, "touches do not touch?" It gets the answer: *Rūpe vibhūte na phusanti phassā*, "in the absence of form, contacts do not bring about contact".

The question that comes up next, and the answer given, are extremely important. They lead to a deep analysis of the *Dhamma*, so much so that both verses deserve to be quoted in full. The question is:

*Kathaṃsametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ,  
sukhaṃ dukhaṃ vā pi kathaṃ vibhoti,  
etaṃ me pabrūhi yathā vibhoti,  
taṃ jāniyāmaṃ iti me mano ahu.*<sup>6</sup>

"To one constituted in which manner does form cease to exist,  
Or, how even pleasure and pain cease to exist,  
Do tell me how all these become non-existent,  
Let us know this, such a thought arose in me."

The answer to this question is couched in this extraordinary verse:

*Na saññasaññī na visaññasaññī,  
no pi asaññī na vibhūtasaññī,  
evaṃ sametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ,  
saññānidānā hi papañcasāṅkhā.<sup>7</sup>*

What this verse purports to describe is the state of a person for whom form as also pleasure and pain has ceased to exist. He is not one with normal perception, nor is he one with abnormal perception. He is not non-percipient, nor has he rescinded perception. It is to one constituted in this manner that form ceases to exist, for, *papañcasāṅkhā* - whatever they may be - have perception as their source.

The meaning of this verse needs to be clarified further. According to the *MahāNiddesa*, the allusion in this verse is to one who is on the path to the formless realms, having attained the first four absorptions.<sup>8</sup> The commentary is forced to that conclusion, because it takes the phrase *na vibhūtasaññī* as negating formless realms as such. The assumption is that the person referred to is neither conscious with normal perception, nor abnormally unconscious, nor devoid of perception, as in the attainment of cessation, nor in one of the formless attainments. So then, the only possibility seemed to be to identify it with some intermediate state. That is why the *MahāNiddesa* and the other commentaries interpret this problematic state as that of one who is on the path to formless attainments, *arūpamaggasamaṅgi*.<sup>9</sup>

However, considerations of context and presentation would lead to a different conclusion. The extraordinary state alluded to by this verse seems to be a surpamundane one, which goes far deeper than the so-called intermediate state. The transcendence of form, indicated here, is more radical than the transcendence in attaining to formless states. It is a transcendence at a supramundane level, as we may well infer from the last line of the verse, *saññānidānā hi papañcasāṅkhā*. *Papañcasāṅkhā* is a term which has a relevance to insight meditation and the denouement of the *sutta* is also suggestive of such a background. The *Kalahavivādasutta*, consisting of sixteen verses, is, from beginning to end, a network of deep questions and answers leading to levels of insight. The opening verse, for instance, states the initial problem as follows:

*Kuto pahūtā kalahā vivādā,  
paridevasokā sahamaccharā ca,  
mānātimānā saha pesuṇā ca,  
kuto pahūtā te tad iṅgha brūhi.*<sup>10</sup>

"Whence do spring up contentions and disputes,  
Lamentations, sorrows and envies,  
And arrogance together with slander,  
Whence do they spring up, pray tell me this."

It is in answer to this basic question that this discourse gradually unfolds itself. In accordance with the law of dependent arising, the cause of contentions and disputes is said to be the tendency to hold things dear, *piyappahūtā kalahā vivādā*. Then the question is about the cause of this idea of holding things dear. The cause of it is said to be desire, *chandaniḍānāni piyāni loke*. Things dear originate from desire. Desire, or interest, makes things 'dear'.

The next question is: What is the origin of desire? Desire is traced to the distinction between the pleasant and the unpleasant. It is in reply to the question regarding the origin of this distinction between the pleasant and the unpleasant that contact is brought in. In fact, it is the question as to the origin of contact, *phasso nu lokasmiṃ kuto niḍāno*, which formed the starting point of our discussion. The answer to that question is name-and-form, *nāmañca rūpañca*. So in this chain of causes, the link that comes next to contact is name-and-form.

Now the verse in question beginning with *na saññasaññī* goes deeper than name-and-form. Even the question about contact has a peculiar wording: *Kismiṃ vibhūte na phusanti phassā*, "When what is not there, do touches not touch?" The question, then, is not just the cessation of contact as such. The answer, too, has the same peculiarity. *Rūpe vibhūte na phusanti phassā*, "It is when form is not there that touches do not touch". It is the subsequent question regarding form that brings out the cryptic verse as the answer.

All this goes to show that the verse in question alludes to a supra-mundane state far transcending the formless or any supposed intermediate stage. The transcendence of pleasure and pain, as well as

perception of form, is implied here. The verse beginning with *na saññasaññī* brings the entire analytical disquisition to a climax. It comes as the thirteenth verse in the series. Usually, such a disquisition leads up to a climax, highlighting *Nibbāna*. It is obvious, therefore, that the reference here is to the *Nibbānic* mind.

We have here four negations: *Na saññasaññī - na visaññasaññī - no pi asaññī - na vibhūtasaññī*. These four negations insinuate a strange supramundane level of perception. In short, it is an attempt to analyse the crux of the *Dhamma* in terms of perception. As to the provocation for such an approach, we may remind ourselves of the fact that, according to the Buddha, release from materiality amounted to a release from the perception of form. Here, we have something really deep.

As it was stated in the *Jaṭāsutta*, for the disentangling of the tangle, name-and-form, resistance and perception of form, have to be cut off. This last mentioned perception of form, or *rūpasaññā*, is highly significant. Before the advent of the Buddha the general belief, even among ascetics, was that, in order to be free from form, one has to attain to the formless, *arūpa*. But, as we pointed out in an earlier sermon, this kind of approach to the question of freedom from form, is like the attempt of one who, having imagined a ghost in the darkness of the night, runs away to escape it.<sup>11</sup> He is simply taking the fantasy of the ghost with him.

Likewise, perception of form is already implicit in the formless. What has been done is only a pushing away of the perception of form with the help of *saṅkhāras*. It is merely a suppression of form through the power of absorption. It does not amount to a cessation of the perception of form.

What, then, is the message the Buddha gave to the world regarding the abandonment by way of eradication? He pointed out that freedom from form can be won only by comprehending a certain deep normative principle behind perception. Till then, one keeps on going round and round in *samsāra*. Even if one breaks away from form to stay for aeons in formless realms, one swings back to form at the end of that period. Why? Because the ghost of form still haunts the formless. It is precisely because of this fact that pre-Buddhist ascetics could not free themselves from the round of existence.

The *Kalahavivādasutta* as a whole, could be regarded as an extremely deep analysis of the basis of the two views of existence and non-existence. Our departure from the *MahāNiddesa* in regard to the interpretation of this discourse might sometimes be called in question. But let the wise judge its reasonableness on its own merits.

According to our interpretation so far, the thirteenth verse marks the climax of the discourse, with its allusion to *Nibbāna*. This is obvious from the fourteenth verse, in which the questioner confesses: *Yaṃ taṃ apucchimha akittayī no, aññaṃ taṃ pucchāma tad iṅgha brūhi*.<sup>12</sup> "Whatever we have asked you, that you have explained to us. Now we wish to ask you something else, pray, give us an answer to that too."

The question now posed is this: *Ettāvataggaṃ nu vadanti h'eke, yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitāse, udāhu aññaṃ pi vadanti etto?* "Do some, who are reckoned as wise men here, declare the highest purity of the soul with this much alone, or else do they posit something beyond this?" The interlocutor is trying to get the solution restated in terms of the two views of existence and non-existence. The term *yakkha* is used in this context in the sense of an individual soul.<sup>13</sup> It betrays an assumption based on a wrong view. The question concerns the purity of the individual soul. The interlocutor wants to ascertain whether wise men in the world declare this state as the highest purity of the soul, or whether they go beyond this in postulating something more. Here is an attempt to get the answer already given restated in terms of the soul theory, a sort of anti-climax. The two concluding verses that follow, give the lie to this presumptuous question.

*Ettāvataggaṃ pi vadanti h'eke  
yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitāse,  
tesaṃ paneke samayaṃ vadanti  
anupādisese kusalā vadānā.*

"Some, who are regarded as wise men here,  
Call this itself the highest purity of the individual soul,  
But there are again some among them, who speak of an annihilation,  
Claiming to be experts in the cessation without residue."

*Ete ca ñatvā upanissitā ti  
ñatvā munī nissaye so vimaṃsī,  
ñatvā vimutto na vivādam eti  
bhavābhavāya na sameti dhīro.*

"Knowing that they are dependent on speculative views,  
The sage with discernment, with regard to whatever is speculative,  
Emancipated as he is through understanding, does not enter into dispute,  
A truly wise man does not fall back either on existence or on non-existence."

The concluding verse amounts to a refutation of both these extreme views. The truly wise sage, who is released with proper discernment of the nature of dogmatic involvement, has no disputes with those who are at loggerheads with each other on the issue of existence and non-existence. This, in effect, means that *Nibbāna* as a goal avoids both extremes of eternalism and nihilism.

The *Upasīvasutta* in the *Pārāyanavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta* provides further proof of the plausibility of the above interpretation. There, *Nibbāna* as the cessation of consciousness in the *arahant*, is compared to the extinction of a flame.

*Accī yathā vātavegena khitto  
atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṅkhaṃ  
evaṃ munī nāmakāyā vimutto  
atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṅkhaṃ.*<sup>14</sup>

"As flame flung on by force of wind,  
Reaches its end, comes not within reckoning,  
So the sage, released from name-and-form,  
Reaches his end, comes not within reckoning."

When a flame goes out, it cannot be reckoned as having gone in any of the directions, like north, east, south, and west. All that can be said about it, is that it has gone out.<sup>15</sup>

Even after the Buddha has given this reply, the brahmin youth *Upasīva*, entrenched as he is in the eternalist view, raises a question

which is similar to the one already quoted. He, too, is trying to understand it in terms of the two extreme views of existence and non-existence.

*Atthaṃgato so uda vā so natthi  
udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo,  
taṃ me munī sādhu viyākarohi,  
tathā hi te vidito esa dhammo.*

"Has he reached his end, or is he no more,  
Or is he eternally well,  
That to me, sage, in full explain,  
For this *Dhamma* is well within your ken."

In the discourses we find similar instances of attempts to determine, in terms of those two extreme views, even a conclusive statement of the Buddha on the question of *Nibbāna*. Yet another instance is found in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*. There the Buddha outlines the path to *Nibbāna* from the point of view of perception. The discourse, therefore, is one that highlights the importance of the term *saññā*. In that discourse, the path of training leading to *Nibbāna* is introduced under the heading *anupubbābhisaññānirodhasampajāna-samāpatti*,<sup>16</sup> "the attainment, with full awareness, to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception".

What is significant in this particular context, is that the invitation for this exposition came from the ascetics of other sects. In response to their request to enlighten them on the subject of the cessation of higher levels of perception, *abhisaññānirodha*, the Buddha gave quite a long account of the course of training required for it. But at the end of that deep exposition, the wandering ascetic *Poṭṭhapāda* raises the following question: *Saññā nu kho purisassa attā, udāhu aññā saññā aññā attā?* "Is perception a man's soul, or is perception something and soul another?" This is typical of their bigotted attitude, which prevented them from understanding this *Dhamma*, free from the soul prejudice.

We went so far as to bring out all this evidence, because the point at issue is fairly important. Even the attempt of the *MahāNiddesa* to explain the verse beginning with *na saññasaññī* is far from conclusive. It is not at all likely that the ascetics of other sects subscribed to



a view that the intermediate stage between the fourth absorption and the first formless absorption is equivalent to the purest state of the soul. Such an interim state is of no account.

As we go on, we might come across further proof of the tenability of this interpretation. The verse beginning with *na saññasaññī* is not easily forgotten, because of its unusual accent on the negative particle. We might have to hark back to it when we come across similar discourses dealing with *Nibbāna*. Till then, let us remind ourselves of two similes we have already given, in order to get a foretaste of the significance of this problematic verse.

Firstly, the Buddha's simile of the magic show as an illustration for consciousness in the *Pheṇapiṇḍūpamasutta - māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ*.<sup>17</sup> While describing the five groups, he compares consciousness to a magical performance at crossroads, conducted by a magician or his apprentice. A man with the right type of vision, watching this magic show, understands that it is empty, hollow and void of essence. It is as if he has seen through the tricks and deceptions of the magician.

While watching a magic show, the audience in general reacts to it with gaping mouths and exclamations. But how would a man with radical attention and penetrative wisdom, who is fully aware of the tricks of the magician, watch a magic show? He is simply looking on with a vacant gaze.

This reminds us of the significance of the word *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*.<sup>18</sup> That gaze is 'endless', *anantaṃ*, in the sense that it does not have the magic show as its object. It goes beyond. It is also 'non-manifestative', *anidassanaṃ*, since the magic show does not manifest itself, as it has now been penetrated through with wisdom. This wisdom is revealing in its 'all lustrous' nature, *sabbato pabhaṃ*, so much so that the tricks are seen - through.

So this man with discernment is watching with a vacant gaze. Now how would such a person appear to one who is deluded and enchanted by the magic show? The latter might regard the former as an inattentive spectator who misses the magic show. Or else, he might think that the other is out of his senses, or insensate.

What the riddle verse beginning with *na saññasaññī* refers to, is such a vacant gaze. That is to say, the person referred to is not one with the ordinary worldling's perception, which is deluded, nor has he fainted and become unconscious, *na saññasaññī na visaññasaññī*. He is not in a trance, devoid of perception, *no pi asaññī*, nor has he put an end to perception, *na vibhūtasaññī*. What these four negations highlight, is that vacant gaze of the one who is emancipated through wisdom.

Somewhat on the lines of the simile used by the Buddha, we might reintroduce, as a flashback, the simile of the cinema.<sup>19</sup> Though it has a modernistic flavour, it could perhaps be more easily understood. Let us suppose that a matinee show of a technicolour film is in progress with closed doors and windows. Suddenly, by some technical defect, the doors and windows are flung open. What would be the change of perspective in the spectator now? He, too, would be looking on with a vacant gaze. Though still the show is going on, he is no longer seeing it. A sort of 'cessation' has occurred, at least temporarily.

The theme as well as the objective of all our sermons is expressed in the quotation beginning with "This is peaceful, this is excellent" (etc.), which forms the rubric, as it were, for each sermon. The change that occurs in the spectator now, is somewhat reminiscent of it. Though not all preparations, at least those preparations connected with the film show are momentarily 'stilled'. Whatever assets in the form of the bundle of experiences on which the film show is evaluated, are 'relinquished'. The craving or the desire for the show has gone down. The colourful show has 'faded away', making way for detachment. The film show has 'ceased' for him. It is also extinct for him, since his burning desire has cooled off now. In this way, we can understand the four puzzling negations in that riddle verse as an attempt to describe the vacant gaze of this spectator, and that man with discernment at the magic show.

Another aspect of special significance in this riddle verse emerges from the last line, *saññānidānā hi papañcasāṅkhā*, which could be tentatively rendered as "for [whatever are termed] *papañcasāṅkhā* have perception as their source". *Papañca* is a term with a deep philosophical dimension in Buddhism. In fact, even the rise of many

Buddhist sects could be put down to an insufficient appreciation of its significance. In our own philosophical tradition, too, much of the confusion with regard to the interpretation of *Nibbāna* seems to have come about due to a lack of understanding in this particular field. Therefore we propose to devote sufficient time and attention to clarify the significance of this term *papañca*.

To begin with, we can bring up clear evidence of the fact that the word *papañca* is used in the discourses to convey some deep idea. As a rule, whenever the Buddha presents a set of ideas pertaining to some *Dhamma* topic, the deepest or the most important of them is mentioned last. This feature is quite evident in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, where very often a sermon is seen to unfold itself in an ascending order, leading to a climax. In an enumeration of items ‘the last but not the least’, happens to be the most important. Granted that this is the general trend, we can trace as many as nine such contexts among the *suttas* in which *papañca* is counted last.<sup>20</sup> This itself is a clue to its importance.

One of the most telling instances is to be found in the Eights of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. It is called *Anuruddhamahāvittakkasutta*. There we are told that to Venerable *Anuruddha*, once meditating in solitude in *Pācīnavaṃsa* Park, the following seven thoughts occurred, concerning *Dhamma*.

*Appicchassāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo mahicchassa; santuṭṭhassāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo asantuṭṭhassa; pavivittassāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo saṅgaṇikārāmassa; āraddhaviriyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo kusītassa; upaṭṭithasatissāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo muṭṭhassatissa; samāhitassāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo asamāhitassa; paññavato ayaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo dappaññassa.*<sup>21</sup>

"This *Dhamma* is for one who wants little, not for one who wants much; this *Dhamma* is for one who is contented, not for one who is discontent; this *Dhamma* is for one who is secluded, not for one who is fond of society; this *Dhamma* is for the energetic, not for one who is lazy; this *Dhamma* is for one who has set up mindfulness, not for one who is laggard in mindfulness; this *Dhamma* is for one who is composed, not for one who is flustered; this *Dhamma* is for one who is wise, not for one who is unwise."

When these seven thoughts occurred to him, Venerable *Anuruddha* kept on pondering over them for a long while, probably with some *Dhamma* zest. He might have even felt confident that this is a perfect set of *Dhamma* thoughts, since the number is seven and wisdom comes last. However, the Buddha was monitoring his behaviour of mind from *Bhesakaḷāvanae*, many leagues away, and found that this set of seven is far from complete. So he appeared before Venerable *Anuruddha* through his psychic power and, having first commended Venerable *Anuruddha* for those seven thoughts, calling them ‘thoughts of a great man’, *mahāpurisavitakka*, gave him an eighth to add on to them and ponder upon. The eighth thought of a great man is:

*Nippapañcārāmassāyaṃ Dhammo nippapañcaratino, nāyaṃ Dhammo papañcārāmassa papañcaratino.* "This *Dhamma* is for one who likes and delights in *nippapañca* and not for one who likes and delights in *papañca*." Following the Buddha's instructions in this concern, Venerable *Anuruddha* attained *Arahant*-hood, and uttered two verses as a paean of joy. From the two verses it becomes clear that the Buddha's helpful hint regarding *nippapañca* - whatever it may mean - was what triggered off his attainment.

*Yathā me ahu saṅkappo,  
tato uttari desayi,  
nippapañcarato Buddhho,  
nippapañcaṃ adesayi.*

*Tassāhaṃ Dhamma maññāya,  
vihāsiṃ sāsane rato,  
tisso vijjā anuppattā,  
kataṃ Buddhassa sāsanaṃ.*<sup>22</sup>

"Whatever thoughts I had on my own,  
Going far beyond them the Lord preached to me,  
The Buddha, who delights in *nippapañca*,  
Preached *nippapañca* to me.

Understanding his *Dhamma*,  
I dwelt delighting in his admonishment,

The three knowledges are attained,  
Done is the Buddha's behest."

The words of Venerable *Anuruddha* clearly reveal the immense significance attached to the term *papañca* and its relevance to the question of attaining *Nibbāna*. It is noteworthy that a number of *suttas* like *Kalahavivādasutta*, *Sakkapañhasutta*, *Cūlasīhanādasutta*, and *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* give prominence to the term *papañca* by listing it as the last.<sup>23</sup> One of the most important discourses throwing light on the significance of this term *papañca* is the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. We shall therefore proceed to discuss this particular *sutta* at some length.

The *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* is in fact a discourse that unfolds itself in three stages, like a three act play. It might not be inapt to say something about the title of this discourse by way of introduction, before we get down to an analysis of it. At the conclusion of the discourse, Venerable *Ānanda* makes the following comment on its significance before the Buddha: "Lord, just as if a man overcome by hunger and exhaustion came upon a honey-ball, and, from whatever side he goes on licking it, he would get a sweet delectable flavour which remains unimpaired, so too, Lord, any nimble witted monk, from whatever angle he examines with wisdom the meaning of this discourse on the *Dhamma*, he would find satisfaction and gladness of mind. What is the name of this discourse, Lord?"<sup>24</sup> It was then that the Buddha gave this name to the discourse, saying: "Well, then, *Ānanda*, you may remember this discourse on the *Dhamma* as the 'honey-ball discourse'."

We might not have the ability to assimilate fully the flavour of this discourse, and in any case we might not even have sufficient time for it today. However, if we are to make a start, we may begin with the first act, that is, where we find the Buddha spending his noon-day siesta at *Mahāvana* in *Kapilavatthu*. The *Sakyan Daṇḍapāṇi*, so called because he used to carry a staff in hand, comes to see the Buddha and puts the following short question to him: *Kimvādī samaṇo kimakkhāyi?* "What does the recluse assert, what does he proclaim?"

The Buddha's reply to it is rather long and winding, so much so that it is not easy to render it clear enough: *Yathāvādi kho, āvuso, sa-*

*devake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiṇi pajāya sadevamanussāya na kenaci loke viggayha tiṭṭhati, yathā ca pana kāmehi viṣaṇyuttaṃ viharantaṃ taṃ brāhmaṇaṃ akathaṃkathiṃ chinna-kukkucaṃ bhavābhava vītataṇhaṃ saññā nānusevati, evaṃvādī kho ahaṃ, āvuso, evamakkhāyī.*

"According to whatever doctrine, friend, one does not quarrel with anyone in the world with its gods, its *Māras* and *Brahmas*, with the progeny of the world comprising recluses and brahmins, gods and men, and also due to which perceptions no more underlie that brahmin who abides detached from sense pleasures, without perplexity, remorse cut off and devoid of craving for any kind of existence, such is my doctrine, friend, thus do I proclaim it."

It must be noted that the word brahmin in this context refers to the *Arahant*. The reply, winding as it is, goes deeper in its insinuations, touching the presumptions of the questioner. That is to say, generally, in the world, if anyone proclaims a doctrine, it is natural that it will come into conflict with other doctrines. Also, in proclaiming that doctrine one has to have latent perceptions relating to it. The Buddha's reply, however, seems to contradict these presumptions. In a nutshell, the reply amounts to this:

Firstly, the Buddha's teaching is such that he does not come into conflict with others. Secondly, perceptions do not lie latent in him.

The occurrence of the term *saññā*, perception, in this context, is also significant. We have already stressed the importance of this term. Perceptions do not lie latent in the Buddha or in the doctrine propounded by him.

*Daṇḍapāṇi's* response to this reply of the Buddha is also recorded in the *sutta*. It is dramatic enough to substantiate our comparison of the discourse to a three-act play. *Daṇḍapāṇi* shook his head, wagged his tongue, raised his eyebrows into a three-lined frown on his forehead and departed, leaning on his stick. The Buddha's reply did not arouse any faith in him.

In the next act we find the Buddha seated in the company of the monks in the evening and telling them of his brief encounter with *Daṇḍapāṇi*. Then one of the monks requested an explanation of the enigmatic reply the Buddha had given to *Daṇḍapāṇi*. The Buddha's

explanation, however, took the form of an even longer statement, no less enigmatic than the former. It runs:

*Yatonidānaṃ, bhikkhu, purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti, ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaṃ abhivaditabbaṃ ajjhosetabbaṃ, esevanto rāgānusayānaṃ, esevanto paṭighānusayānaṃ, esevanto diṭṭhānusayānaṃ, esevanto vicikicchānusayānaṃ, esevanto mānānusayānaṃ, esevanto bhavarāgānusayānaṃ, esevanto avijjānusayānaṃ, esevanto daṇḍādāna-satthādāna-kalaha-viggaha-vivāda-tuvaṃtuvaṃ-pesuṇña-musāvādānaṃ, etthete pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti.*

"From whatever source *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā* beset a man, if, in regard to that, there is nothing to be delighted in, asserted, or clung to, then this itself is the end of the underlying tendencies to attachment, to aversion, to views, to doubts, to conceit, to attachment towards existence, and to ignorance. This itself is the end of taking rods and weapons, quarrels, disputes, accusations, slander and false speech. Here these evil unskilful states cease without remainder."

After making such a long and winding statement, the Buddha rose from his seat and went into his dwelling, as if it were the end of the second act. One can well imagine the consternation of the monks at this dramatic turn of events. The explanation looked even more astounding than the original statement, because of its elliptical character. So here is a case of a puzzle within a puzzle. It is the first few words that are most puzzling.

Naturally, the monks were so perplexed that they decided to approach Venerable *MahāKaccāna* and request him to give them a detailed exposition of the Buddha's words, as he had been praised by the Buddha for his skill in this respect. When they went to him and made the request, Venerable *MahāKaccāna* showed some modest hesitation at first, but finally agreed to it.

Now we come to the third act, in which Venerable *MahāKaccāna* is giving the exposition.

*Cakkhuñc'āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tattonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti*

*atītānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīññeeyyesu rūpesu*. Not only with regard to eye and forms, but also with reference to all the other sense-faculties, including the mind, together with their respective sense-objects, a similar statement is made. Suffice it to translate the one quoted above as a paradigm.

"Dependent on the eye and forms, brethren, arises eye-consciousness; the concurrence of the three is contact; because of contact, feeling; what one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about, one turns into *papañca*; what one turns into *papañca*, owing to that" (*tatonidānaṃ*, which is the correlative of *yatonidānaṃ* forming the key word in the Buddha's brief summary above) "*papañcasaññāsaṅkhā* beset him who directed his powers of sense-perception. They overwhelm him and subjugate him in respect of forms cognizable by the eye belonging to the past, the future and the present." It is the same with regard to the ear and sounds and the rest. Lastly, even about mind and mind-objects Venerable *MahāKaccāna* makes a similar statement.

At this point, we are forced to say something about the commentarial explanation of this particular passage. It seems that the commentarial exegesis has failed to bring out the deeper implications of the term *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*. The main reason for the confusion is the lack of attention on the part of the commentator to the peculiar syntax of the formula in question.

The formula begins on an impersonal note, *cakkhuñc'āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ*. The word *paṭicca* is reminiscent of the law of dependent arising. *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*, "the concurrence of the three is contact". *Phassapaccayā vedanā*, "conditioned by contact is feeling". From here onwards the formula takes a different turn. *Yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti*, "what one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about, one turns into *papañca*".

In this way, we can distinguish three phases in this description of the process of sense perception in Venerable *MahāKaccāna*'s exposition. It begins with an impersonal note, but at the point of feeling it takes on a personal ending, suggestive of deliberate activity. *Yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ*



*papañceti*, "what one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about, one turns into *papañca*".

Though we render the formula in this way, the commentary explains it differently. It ignores the significance of the personal ending and interprets the sensory process periphrastically, for example as *saññā sañjānāti, vitakko vitakketi*, "perception perceives", "reasoning reasons about", etc.<sup>25</sup> It amounts to saying that, when feeling occurs, perception comes forward and perceives it, then reasoning takes up the task of reasoning about perception. *Papañca* then steps in and converts that reasoning into *papañca*. This is how the commentary explains that formula. It has left out of account the significance of the use of the active voice in this section of the formula.

There is a special purpose in using the active voice in this context. It is in order to explain how a man is overwhelmed by *papañcasaññāsāṅkhā* - whatever it may be - that Venerable *MahāKaccāna* has introduced this sequence of events in three phases. In fact, he is trying to fill in the gap in the rather elliptical statement of the Buddha, beginning with *yatonidānaṃ, bhikkhu, purisaṃ papañcasaññāsāṅkhā samudācaranti*, "monk, from whatever source *papañcasaññāsāṅkhā* beset a man". The initial phase is impersonal, but then comes the phase of active participation.

From feeling onwards, the person behind it takes over. What one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about, one turns into *papañca*. The grossest phase is the third. Venerable *MahāKaccāna's* formula shows how the process of sense-perception gradually assumes a gross form. This third phase is implicit in the words *yaṃ papañceti tattonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsāṅkhā samudācaranti*, "what one turns into *papañca*, owing to that *papañcasaññāsāṅkhā* beset that man". The word *purisaṃ* is in the accusative case here, implying that the person who directed sense-perception is now beset with, or overwhelmed by, *papañcasaññāsāṅkhā*, as a result of which all the evil unskilful mental states come to be. This itself is an index to the importance of the term *papañca*.

The course of events suggested by these three phases may be illustrated with the legend of the three magicians. While journeying through a forest, three men, skilled in magic, came upon a scattered heap of bones of a tiger. To display their skill, one of them converted the bones into a complete skeleton, the second gave it flesh and blood, and the third gave it life. The resurrected tiger devoured all three of them. It is such a predicament that is hinted at by the peculiar syntax of the formula in question.

The comparison of this discourse to a honey-ball is understandable, since it holds the secret of the latent tendencies towards dogmatic views. It also affords a deep insight into the nature of the linguistic medium, and words and concepts in everyday usage.

We haven't yet clarified the meaning of the term *papañca*. It is already found in common parlance as a word suggestive of verbosity and circumlocution. Etymologically, it is traceable to *pra* + *√pañc*, and it conveys such meanings as 'spreading out', 'expansion', 'diffuseness' and 'manifoldness'. Verbosity and circumlocution usually lead to delusion and confusion. However, the word *papañca* is sometimes used to denote a conscious elaboration of what is already expressed in brief. In this particular sense, the cognate term *vipañcitaññū* is used in the context of four types of persons, distinguished according to their levels of understanding, namely *ugghaṭitaññū*, *vipañcitaññū*, *neyyo*, and *padaparamo*.<sup>26</sup> Here, *vipañcitaññū* signifies that sort of person to whom comprehension of the doctrine comes when the meaning of what is uttered in brief is analysed in detail.

All in all, *papañca* in linguistic usage has the insinuation of a certain degree of delusion brought about by verbosity and circumlocution. But here the term has a deeper philosophical dimension. Here it is not a case of linguistic usage, but the behaviour of the mind as such, since it concerns sense-perception. The fact that it follows in the wake of *vitakka* is suggestive of its affinity to *vicāra*, or discursive thought, so often quoted as the twin of *vitakka*, that is as *vitak-kavicāra*.

The mind has the tendency to wander afar, all alone, *dūraṅga-maṃ ekacaraṃ*,<sup>27</sup> through the medium of thought, or *vitakka*. When *vitakka* breaks loose and runs riot, it creates a certain deluded state of mind, which is *papañca*.

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> S III 86, *Khajjanīyasutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> Sn 867, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>4</sup> S I 13, *Jaṭāsutta*; cf. volume I sermon 1.  
<sup>5</sup> Sn 871-872, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>6</sup> Sn 873, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>7</sup> Sn 874, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> Nidd I 280.  
<sup>9</sup> Nidd I 280 and Pj II 553.  
<sup>10</sup> Sn 862, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> See sermon 7.  
<sup>12</sup> Sn 875, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>13</sup> Similar connotations recur in the variant reading *paramayakkhavisuddhi* at A V 64, and in the expression *yakkhassa suddhi* at Sn 478.  
<sup>14</sup> Sn 1074, *Upasīvamāṇavapucchā*.  
<sup>15</sup> M I 487, *Aggivacchagottasutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> D I 184, *Poṭṭhapādasutta*.  
<sup>17</sup> S III 142, *Pheṇapiṇḍūpamasutta*.; cf. also volume II sermon 6.  
<sup>18</sup> M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*; cf. also volume II sermon 8.  
<sup>19</sup> See sermons 5, 6 and 7.  
<sup>20</sup> D II 276, *Sakkapañhasutta*; D III 287, *Dasuttarasutta*; M I 65, *Cūlasīhanādasutta*; M I 112 *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*; A III 293, *Bhaddakasutta*; A III 294, *Anutappīyasutta*; A IV 230, *Anuruddhamahāvitakkasutta*; A IV 331, *Parihānasutta*; Sn 874, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>21</sup> A IV 228, *Anuruddhamahāvitakkasutta*.  
<sup>22</sup> A IV 235, *Anuruddhamahāvitakkasutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> D II 276, *Sakkapañhasutta*; M I 65, *Cūlasīhanādasutta*; M I 112 *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*; Sn 874, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>24</sup> M I 114, *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> Ps II 77.  
<sup>26</sup> A II 135, *Ugghatitaññūsutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> Dh 37, *Cittavagga*.

## **Sermon - 12**

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho  
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*<sup>1</sup>

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction". With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks.

This is the twelfth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*. At the beginning of our last sermon, we brought up the two terms *papañca* and *nippapañca*, which help us rediscover quite a deep dimension in Buddhist philosophy, hidden under the sense of time. In our attempt to clarify the meaning of these two terms, initially with the help of the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*, what we could determine so far is the fact that *papañca* signifies a certain gross state in sense-perception.

Though in ordinary linguistic usage *papañca* meant ‘elaboration’, ‘circumlocution’, and ‘verbosity’, the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* has shown us that in the context of sensory perception it has some special significance. It portrays how a person, who directed sense perception, is overwhelmed by *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā* with regard to sense-objects relating to the three periods of time, past, present, and future, as a result of his indulging in *papañca* based on reasoning about percepts.

All this goes to show that *papañca* has connotations of some kind of delusion, obsession, and confusion arising in a man’s mind due to sense perception. In explaining the meaning of this term, commentators very often make use of words like *pamatta*, ‘excessively intoxicated’, ‘indolent’, *pamāda*, ‘headlessness’, and *madana*, ‘intoxication’. For example: *Kenatthēna papañco? Mattapamattākārapāpanatthēna papañco.*<sup>2</sup> "Papañca in what sense? In the sense that it

leads one on to a state of intoxication and indolence." Sometimes it is commented on as follows: *papañcitā ca honti pamattākārapattā*.<sup>3</sup> "They are subject to *papañca*, that is, they become more or less inebriated or indolent." Or else it is explained as *madanākārasaṇḥito kilesapapañco*.<sup>4</sup> "*Papañca* of a defiling nature which is of an inebriating character".

On the face of it, *papañca* looks like a term similar in sense to *pamāda*, indolence, heedlessness. But there is a subtle difference in meaning between them. *Pamāda*, even etymologically, conveys the basic idea of 'excessive intoxication'. It has a nuance of inactivity or inefficiency, due to intoxication. The outcome of such a state of affairs is either negligence or heedlessness. But as we have already pointed out, *papañca* has an etymological background suggestive of expansion, elaboration, verbosity and circumlocution. Therefore, it has no connotations of inactivity and inefficiency. On the other hand, it seems to imply an inability to reach the goal due to a deviation from the correct path.

Let us try to understand the distinction in meaning between *pamāda* and *papañca* with the help of an illustration. Suppose we ask someone to go on an urgent errand to Colombo. If instead of going to Colombo, he goes to the nearest tavern and gets drunk and sleeps there - that is a case of *pamāda*. If, on the other hand, he takes to a long labyrinthine road, avoiding the shortest cut to Colombo, and finally reaches Kandy instead of Colombo - that is *papañca*.

There is such a subtle difference in the nuances associated with these two terms. Incidentally, there is a couplet among the Sixes of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, which sounds like a distant echo of the illustration we have already given.

*Yo papañcam anuyutto  
papañcābhirato mago,  
virādhayī so Nibbānaṃ,  
yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ.  
Yo ca papañcaṃ hitvāna,  
nippapañca pade rato,  
ārādhayī so Nibbānaṃ,*

*yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ.*<sup>5</sup>

"The fool who indulges in *papañca*,  
Being excessively fond of it,  
Has missed the way to *Nibbāna*,  
The incomparable freedom from bondage.  
He who, having given up *papañca*,  
delights in the path to *nippapañca*,  
Is well on the way to *Nibbāna*,  
The incomparable freedom from bondage."

In this way we can understand the difference between the two words *papañca* and *pamāda* in respect of the nuances associated with them.

Commentaries very often explain the term *papañca* simply as a synonym of craving, conceit, and views, *taṇhādīṭṭhimānānam etaṃ adhivacanaṃ.*<sup>6</sup> But this does not amount to a definition of *papañca* as such. It is true that these are instances of *papañca*, for even in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* we came across the three expressions *abhinanditabbaṃ*, *abhivaditabbaṃ*, and *ajjhositabbaṃ*, suggestive of them.<sup>7</sup>

*Abhinanditabbaṃ* means 'what is worth delighting in', *abhivadi-tabbaṃ* means 'what is worth asserting', *ajjhositabbaṃ* means 'what is worth clinging on to'. These three expressions are very often used in the discourses to denote the three defilements craving, conceit and views. That is to say, 'delighting in' by way of craving with the thought 'this is mine'; 'asserting' by way of conceit with the thought 'this am I'; and 'clinging on to' with the dogmatic view 'this is my soul'.

Therefore the commentarial exegesis on *papañca* in terms of craving, conceit and views is to a great extent justifiable. However, what is particularly significant about the term *papañca* is that it conveys the sense of proliferation and complexity of thought, on the lines of those three basic tendencies. That is why the person concerned is said to be 'overwhelmed by *papañcasaññāsankhā*'.<sup>8</sup>

Here we need to clarify for ourselves the meaning of the word *sankhā*. According to the commentary, it means 'parts', *papañcasaññāsankhā* 'ti *ettha sankhā*'ti *koṭṭhāso*,<sup>9</sup> "'*papañcasaññāsankhā*', here-

in 'saṅkhā' means parts". In that case *papañcasaṅkhā* could be rendered as 'parts of *papañca*', which says nothing significant about *saṅkhā* itself. On the other hand, if one carefully examines the contexts in which the terms *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā* and *papañcasaṅkhā* are used in the discourses, one gets the impression that *saṅkhā* means something deeper than 'part' or 'portion'.

*Saṅkhā*, *samaññā* and *paññatti* are more or less synonymous terms. Out of them, *paññatti* is fairly well known as a term for 'designation'. *Saṅkhā* and *samaññā* are associated in sense with *paññatti*. *Saṅkhā* means 'reckoning' and *samaññā* is 'appellation'. These three terms are often used in connection with worldly usage.

We come across quite a significant reference, relevant to this question of *papañca*, in the *Niruttipathasutta* of the *Khandhasamyutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. It runs: *Tayome, bhikkhave, niruttipathā, adhivacanapathā, paññattipathā asaṅkiṇṇā asaṅkiṇṇapubbā, na saṅkīyanti, na saṅkīyissanti, appaṭikuṭṭhā samaṇehi brāhmaṇehi viññūhi. Katame tayo? Yaṃ, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ atītaṃ niruddhaṃ vipariṇataṃ 'ahosī'ti tassa saṅkhā, 'ahosī'ti tassa samaññā, 'ahosī'ti tassa paññatti, na tassa saṅkhā 'atthī'ti, na tassa saṅkhā 'bhavissatī'ti.*<sup>10</sup>

"Monks, there are these three pathways of linguistic usage, of synonyms and of designation, that are not mixed up, have never been mixed up, that are not doubted and will not be doubted, and are undisputed by intelligent recluses and brahmins. What are the three? Whatever form, monks, that is past, ceased, transformed, 'it was' is the reckoning for it, 'it was' is its appellation, 'it was' is its designation, it is not reckoned as 'it is', it is not reckoned as 'it will be'."

The burden of this discourse, as it proceeds in this way, is the maxim that the three periods of time should never be mixed up or confounded. For instance, with regard to that form that is past, a verb in the past tense is used. One must not imagine what is past to be existing as something present. Nor should one imagine whatever belongs to the future as already existing in the present.

Whatever has been, is past. Whatever is, is present. It is a common mistake to conceive of something that is yet to come as some-



thing already present, and to imagine whatever is past also as present. This is the confusion the world is in. That is why those recluses and brahmins, who are wise, do not mix them up.

Just as the above quoted paragraph speaks of whatever is past, so the discourse continues to make similar statements with regard to whatever is present or future. It touches upon all the five aggregates, for instance, whatever form that is present is reckoned as 'it is', and not as 'it was' or 'it will be'. Similarly, whatever form that is yet to come is reckoned as 'it will be', and not as 'it was' or 'it is'. This is how the *Niruttipathasutta* lays down the basic principle of not confounding the linguistic usages pertaining to the three periods of time.

Throughout this discourse, the term *saṅkhā* is used in the sense of 'reckoning'. In fact, the three terms *saṅkhā*, *samaññā* and *paññatti* are used somewhat synonymously in the same way as *nirutti*, *adhi-vacana* and *paññatti*. All these are in sense akin to each other in so far as they represent the problem of worldly usage.

This makes it clear that the intriguing term *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā* has a relevance to the question of language and modes of linguistic usages. The term could thus be rendered as 'reckonings born of prolific perceptions'.

If we are to go deeper into the significance of the term *saṅkhā*, we may say that its basic sense in linguistic usage is connected with numerals, since it means 'reckoning'. As a matter of fact, numerals are more primitive than letters, in a language.

To perceive is to grasp a sign of permanence in something. Perception has the characteristic of grasping a sign. It is with the help of signs that one recognizes. Perceptions of forms, perceptions of sounds, perceptions of smells, perceptions of tastes, etc., are so many ways of grasping signs. Just as a party going through a forest would blaze a trail with an axe in order to find their way back with the help of notches on the trees, so does perception catch a sign in order to be able to recognize.

This perception is like the groping of a blind man, fumbling in the dark. There is a tendency in the mind to grasp a sign after whatever is felt. So it gives rise to perceptions of forms, perceptions of sounds, etc. A sign necessarily involves the notion of permanence. That is to

say, a sign stands for permanence. A sign has to remain unchanged until one returns to it to recognize it. That is also the secret behind the mirage nature of perception as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

As a matter of fact, the word *saññā*, used to denote perception as such, primarily means the ‘sign’, ‘symbol’, or ‘mark’, with which one recognizes. But recognition alone is not enough. What is recognized has to be made known to the world, to the society at large. That is why *saññā*, or perception, is followed by *saṅkhā*, or reckoning.

The relationship between *saṅkhā*, *samaññā* and *paññatti* in this connection could also be explained. *Saṅkhā* as ‘reckoning’ or ‘counting’ totals up or adds up into groups of, say, five or six. It facilitates our work, particularly in common or communal activities. So the most primitive symbol in a language is the numeral.

*Samaññā*, or appellation, is a common agreement as to how something should be known. If everyone had its own way of making known, exchange of ideas would be impossible. *Paññatti*, or designation, determines the pattern of whatever is commonly agreed upon. This way we can understand the affinity of meaning between the terms *saṅkhā*, *samaññā* and *paññatti*.

Among them, *saṅkhā* is the most primitive form of reckoning. It does not simply mean reckoning or adding up in terms of numerals. It is characteristic of language too, as we may infer from the occurrence of the expression *saṅkhaṃ gacchati* in many discourses. There the reckoning meant is a particular linguistic usage. We come across a good illustration of such a linguistic usage in the *MahāHatthipadopamasutta*, where Venerable *Sāriputta* is addressing his fellow monks.

*Seyyathāpi, āvuso, kaṭṭhañca paṭicca valliñca paṭicca tiṇaṇca paṭicca mattikañca paṭicca ākāso parivārīto agāraṃ tveva saṅkhaṃ gacchati; evameva kho, āvuso, aṭṭhiñca paṭicca nahāruñca paṭicca maṃsañca paṭicca cammañca paṭicca ākāso parivārīto rūpaṃ tveva saṅkhaṃ gacchati.*<sup>12</sup>

"Friends, just as when space is enclosed by timber and creepers, grass and clay, it comes to be reckoned as ‘a house’; even so, when space is enclosed by bones and sinews, flesh and skin, it comes to be reckoned as ‘material form’."

Here the expression *saṅkhaṃ gacchati* stands for a designation as a concept. It is the way something comes to be known. Let us go for another illustration from a sermon by the Buddha himself. It is one that throws a flood of light on some deep aspects of Buddhist philosophy, relating to language, grammar and logic. It comes in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, where the Buddha is exhorting *Citta Hatthisāriputta*.

*Seyyathāpi, Citta, gavā khīraṃ, khīramhā dadhi, dadhimhā nava-nītaṃ, navaṇītamhā sappi, sappimhā sappimaṇḍo. Yasmiṃ samaye khīraṃ hoti, neva tasmīṃ samaye dadhī'ti saṅkhaṃ gacchati, na navaṇītan'ti saṅkhaṃ gacchati, na sappī'ti saṅkhaṃ gacchati, na sappimaṇḍo'ti saṅkhaṃ gacchati, khīraṃ tveva tasmīṃ samaye saṅkhaṃ gacchati.*<sup>13</sup>

"Just, *Citta*, as from a cow comes milk, and from milk curds, and from curds butter, and from butter ghee, and from ghee junket. But when it is milk, it is not reckoned as curd or butter or ghee or junket, it is then simply reckoned as milk."

We shall break up the relevant quotation into three parts, for facility of comment. This is the first part giving the introductory simile. The simile itself looks simple enough, though it is suggestive of something deep. The simile is in fact extended to each of the other stages of milk formation, namely curd, butter, ghee, and junket, pointing out that in each case, it is not reckoned otherwise. Now comes the corresponding doctrinal point.

*Evameva kho, Citta, yasmiṃ samaye oḷāriko attapaṭilābho hoti, neva tasmīṃ samaye manomayo attapaṭilābho'ti saṅkhaṃ gacchati, na arūpo attapaṭilābho'ti saṅkhaṃ gacchati, oḷāriko attapaṭilābho tveva tasmīṃ samaye saṅkhaṃ gacchati.*

"Just so, *Citta*, when the gross mode of personality is going on, it is not reckoned as 'the mental mode of personality', nor as 'the formless mode of personality', it is then simply reckoned as 'the gross mode of personality'."

These three modes of personality correspond to the three planes of existence, the sensuous, the form, and the formless. The first refers to the ordinary physical frame, sustained by material food, *kabalīkārahārabhakkho*, enjoying the sense pleasures.<sup>14</sup> At the time a person is in this sensual field, possessing the gross mode of personality,

one must not imagine that the mental mode or the formless mode of personality is hidden in him.

This is the type of confusion the ascetics entrenched in a soul theory fell into. They even conceived of self as fivefold, encased in concentric shells. Whereas in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* one comes across the *pañcakośa* theory, the reference here is to three states of the self, as gross, mental and formless modes of personality. Out of the five selves known to *Upaniṣadic* philosophy, namely *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *saṃjñāmaya*, *viññānamaya* and *ānandamaya*, only three are mentioned here, in some form or other. The gross mode of personality corresponds to *annamayātman*, the mental mode of personality is equivalent to *saṃjñāmayātman*, while the formless mode of personality stands for *viññānamayātman*.

The correct perspective of understanding this distinction is provided by the milk simile. Suppose someone gets a *jhāna* and attains to a mental mode of personality. He should not imagine that the formless mode of personality is already latent in him. Nor should he think that the former gross mode of personality is still lingering in him. They are just temporary states, to be distinguished like milk and curd. This is the moral the Buddha is trying to drive home.

Now we come to the third part of the quotation, giving the Buddha's conclusion, which is extremely important. *Imā kho, Citta, lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo, yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasaṃ*. "For all these, *Citta*, are worldly apparitions, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly designations, which the *Tathāgata* makes use of without tenacious grasping."

It is the last word in the quotation, *aparāmasaṃ*, which is extremely important. There is no tenacious grasping. The Buddha uses the language much in the same way as parents make use of a child's homely prattle, for purpose of meditation. He had to present this *Dhamma*, which goes against the current,<sup>15</sup> through the medium of worldly language, with which the worldlings have their transaction in defilements. That is probably the reason why the Buddha at first hesitated to preach this *Dhamma*. He must have wondered how he can convey such a deep *Dhamma* through the terminology, the grammar and the logic of worldlings.

All this shows the immense importance of the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*. If the ordinary worldling presumes that ghee is already inherent in the milk obtained from the cow, he will try to argue it out on the grounds that after all it is milk that becomes ghee. And once it becomes ghee, he might imagine that milk is still to be found in ghee, in some latent form.

As a general statement, this might sound ridiculous. But even great philosophers were unaware of the implications of their theories. That is why the Buddha had to come out with this homely milk simile, to bring them to their senses. Here lies the secret of the soul theory. It carried with it the implication that past and future also exist in the same sense as the present.

The Buddha, on the other hand, uses the verb *atthi*, ‘is’, only for what exists in the present. He points out that, whatever is past, should be referred to as *ahosi*, ‘was’, and whatever is yet to come, in the future, should be spoken of as *bhavissati*, ‘will be’. This is the fundamental principle underlying the *Niruttipathasutta* already quoted. Any departure from it would give rise to such confusions as referred to above.

Milk, curd, butter and ghee are merely so many stages in a certain process. The worldlings, however, have put them into watertight compartments, by designating and circumscribing them. They are caught up in the conceptual trap of their own making.

When the philosophers started working out the logical relationship between cause and effect, they tended to regard these two as totally unrelated to each other. Since milk becomes curd, either the two are totally different from each other, or curd must already be latent in milk for it to become curd. This is the kind of dilemma their logic posed for them.

Indian philosophical systems reflect a tendency towards such logical subtleties. They ended up with various extreme views concerning the relation between cause and effect. In a certain school of Indian philosophy, known as *ārambhavāda*, effect is explained as something totally new, unrelated to the cause. Other schools of philosophy, such as *satkāriyavāda* and *satkaraṇavāda*, also arose by confusing this issue. For them, effect is already found hidden in the cause, before it comes out. Yet others took only the cause as real.

Such extreme conclusions were the result of forgetting the fact that all these are mere concepts in worldly usage. Here we have a case of getting caught up in a conceptual trap of one's own making.

This confusion regarding the three periods of time, characteristic of such philosophers, could be illustrated with some folk tales and fables, which lucidly bring out a deep truth. There is, for instance, the tale of the goose that lays golden eggs, well known to the West. A certain goose used to lay a golden egg every day. Its owner, out of excessive greed, thought of getting all the as yet ones. He killed the goose and opened it up, only to come to grief. He had wrongly imagined the future to be already existing in the present.

This is the kind of blunder the soul theorists also committed. In the field of philosophy, too, the prolific tendency led to such subtle complications. It is not much different from the proliferations indulged in by the ordinary worldling in his daily life. That is why reckonings born of prolific perception are said to be so overwhelming. One is overwhelmed by one's own reckonings and figurings out, under the influence of prolific perceptions.

An Indian poet once spotted a ruby, shining in the moon light, and eagerly approached it, enchanted by it, only to find a blood red spittle of beetle. We often come across such humorous stories in literature, showing the pitfalls of prolific conceptualisation.

The introductory story, leading up to the *Dhammapada* verse on the rambling nature of the mind, *dūraṅgamaṃ ekacaraṃ, asarīraṃ guhāsayam*, as recorded in the commentary to the *Dhammapada*, is very illustrative.<sup>16</sup> The pupil of venerable *Saṅgharakkhita Thera*, a nephew of his, indulged in a *papañca* while fanning his teacher. In his imagination, he disrobed, got married, had a child, and was coming in a chariot with his wife and child to see his former teacher. The wife, through carelessness, dropped the child and the chariot run away. So he whipped his wife in a fit of anger, only to realize that he had dealt a blow on his teacher's head with the fan still in his hand. Being an *arahant* with psychic powers, his teacher immediately understood the pupil's state of mind, much to the latter's discomfiture.

A potter in Sanskrit literature smashed his pots in a sort of businness *papañca* and was remorseful afterwards. Similarly the proud

milk maid in English literature dropped a bucket of milk on her head in a day dream of her rosy future. In all these cases one takes as present something that is to come in the future. This is a serious confusion between the three periods of time. The perception of permanence, characteristic of concepts, lures one away from reality into a world of fantasy, with the result that one is overwhelmed and obsessed by it.

So this is what is meant by *papañcasaññāsaṅkhasamudācāra*. So overwhelming are reckonings born of prolific perception. As we saw above, the word *saṅkhā* is therefore nearer to the idea of reckoning than that of part or portion.

*Tathāgatas* are free from such reckonings born of prolific perception, *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*, because they make use of worldly linguistic usages, conventions and designation, being fully aware of their worldly origin, as if they were using a child's language. When an adult uses a child's language, he is not bound by it. Likewise, the Buddhas and *arahants* do not forget that these are worldly usages. They do not draw any distinction between the relative and the absolute with regard to those concepts. For them, they are merely concepts and designations in worldly usage. That is why the *Tathāgatas* are said to be free from *papañca*, that is to say they are *nippapañca*, whereas the world delights in *papañca*. This fact is clearly expressed in the following verse in the *Dhammapada*.

*Ākāse va padaṃ natthi  
samaṇo natthi bāhire,  
papañcābhiratā pajā,  
nippapañcā Tathāgatā.*<sup>17</sup>

"No track is there in the air,  
And no recluse elsewhere,  
This populace delights in prolificity,  
But 'Thus-gone-ones' are non-prolific."

It is because the *Tathāgatas* are non-prolific that *nippapañca* is regarded as one of the epithets of *Nibbāna* in a long list of thirty-three.<sup>18</sup> Like *dukkhūpasama*, quelling of suffering, *papañcavūpasama*, 'quelling of prolificity', is also recognized as an epithet of *Nibbāna*. It is also referred to as *papañcanirodha*, 'cessation of pro-

lificity'. We come across such references to *Nibbāna* in terms of *papañca* quite often.

The *Tathāgatas* are free from *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*, although they make use of worldly concepts and designations. In the *Kalahavivādasutta* we come across the dictum *saññānidānā hi papañcasaṅkhā*,<sup>19</sup> according to which reckonings through prolificity arise from perception. Now the *Tathāgatas* have gone beyond the pale of perception in attaining wisdom. That is why they are free from *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*, reckonings born of prolific perception.

Such reckonings are the lot of those who grope in the murk of ignorance, under the influence of perception. Since Buddhas and *arahants* are enlightened with wisdom and released from the limitations of perception, they do not entertain such reckonings born of prolific perception. Hence we find the following statement in the *Udāna*: *Tena kho pana samayena Bhagavā attano papañcasaññāsaṅkhāpahānaṃ paccavekkhamāno nisinno hoti*.<sup>20</sup> "And at that time the Exalted One was seated contemplating his own abandonment of reckonings born of prolific perception." The allusion here is to the bliss of emancipation. Quite a meaningful verse also occurs in this particular context.

*Yassa papañcā ñhiti ca natthi,  
sandānaṃ palighaṇa vītivatto,  
taṃ nittaṇhaṃ munīṃ carantaṃ,  
nāvajānāti sadevako pi loko.*<sup>21</sup>

"To whom there are no proliferations and standstills,  
Who has gone beyond the bond and the deadlock,  
In that craving-free sage, as he fares along,  
The world with its gods sees nothing to decry."

The two words *papañca* and *ñhiti* in juxtaposition highlight the primary sense of *papañca* as a 'rambling' or a 'straying away'. According to the *Nettipakaraṇa*, the idiomatic standstill mentioned here refers to the latencies, *anusaya*.<sup>22</sup> So the rambling *papañcas* and doggedly persisting *anusayas* are no longer there. The two words *sandānaṃ* and *palighaṇa* are also metaphorically used in the *Dhamma*. Views, *diṭṭhi*, are the bond, and ignorance, *avijjā*, is the deadlock.<sup>23</sup>



The fact that *papañca* is characteristic of worldly thoughts, connected with the household life, emerges from the following verse in the *Salāyatanasaṃyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*.

*Papañcasaññā itarītarā narā,  
papañcayantā upayanti saññino,  
manomayaṃ gehasitañca sabbam,  
panujja nekkhammasitaṃ irīyati.*<sup>24</sup>

"The common run of humanity, impelled by prolific perception,  
Approach their objects with rambling thoughts, limited by perception as they are,  
Dispelling all what is mind-made and connected with the household,

One moves towards that which is connected with renunciation."

The approach meant here is comparable to the approach of that imaginative poet towards the ruby shining in moonlight, only to discover a spittle of beetle. The last two lines of the verse bring out the correct approach of one who is aiming at *Nibbāna*. It requires the dispelling of such daydreams connected with the household as entertained by the nephew of Venerable *Sangharakkhita Thera*.

Worldlings are in the habit of constructing speculative views by taking too seriously linguistic usage and grammatical structure. All pre-Buddhistic philosophers made such blunders as the confusion between milk and curd. Their blunders were mainly due to two reasons, namely, the persistent latency towards perception and the dogmatic adherence to views. It is precisely these two points that came up in the very first statement of the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*, discussed in our previous sermon. That is to say, they formed the gist of the Buddha's cursory reply to the *Sakyan Daṇḍapāṇi's* question. For the latter it was a riddle and that is why he raised his eyebrows, wagged his tongue and shook his head. The question was: "What does the recluse assert and what does he proclaim?"<sup>25</sup> The Buddha's reply was: "According to whatever doctrine one does not quarrel or dispute with anyone in the world, such a doctrine do I preach. And due to whatever statements, perceptions do not underlie as latencies, such statements do I proclaim."

This might well appear a strange paradox. But since we have already made some clarification of the two terms *saññā* and *paññā*, we might as well bring up now an excellent quotation to distinguish the difference between these two. It is in fact the last verse in the *Māgandiyasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, the grand finale as it were.

*Saññāviratassa na santi ganthā,  
paññāvimuttassa na santi mohā,  
saññañca diṭṭhiñca ye aggahesum,  
te ghaṭṭhayantā vicaranti loke.*<sup>26</sup>

"To one unattached to percepts no bonds exist,  
In one released through wisdom no delusions persist,  
But they that cling to percepts and views,  
Go about rambling in this world."

In the *Pupphasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta* one comes across the following declaration of the Buddha. *Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, lokena vivadāmi, loko va mayā vivadati.*<sup>27</sup> "Monks, I do not dispute with the world, it is the world that is disputing with me."

This looks more or less like a contradictory statement, as if one would say 'he is quarrelling with me but I am not quarrelling with him'. However, the truth of the statement lies in the fact that the Buddha did not hold on to any view. Some might think that the Buddha also held on to some view or other. But he was simply using the child's language, for him there was nothing worth holding on to in it.

There is a Canonical episode which is a good illustration of this fact. One of the most well-known among the debates the Buddha had with ascetics of other sects is the debate with *Saccaka*, the ascetic. An account of it is found in the *CūḷaSaccakasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The debate had all the outward appearance of a hot dispute. However, towards the end of it, the Buddha makes the following challenge to *Saccaka*: "As for you, *Aggivessana*, drops of sweat have come down from your forehead, soaked through your upper robe and reached the ground. But, *Aggivessana*, there is no sweat on my body now." So saying he uncovered his golden-hued body in that assembly, *iti Bhagavā tasmiṃ parisaṭṭhaṃ suvaṇṇavaṇṇaṃ kāyaṃ vivari.*<sup>28</sup>

Even in the midst of a hot debate, the Buddha had no agitation because he did not adhere to any views. There was for him no bondage

in terms of craving, conceit and views. Even in the thick of a heated debate the Buddha was uniformly calm and cool.

It is the same with regard to perception. Percepts do not persist as a latency in him. We spoke of name-and-form as an image or a reflection. Buddhas do not have the delusion arising out of name-and-form, since they have comprehended it as a self-image. There is a verse in the *Sabhiyasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* which puts across this idea.

*Anuvicca papañca nāmarūpaṃ,  
ajjhataṃ bahiddhā ca rogamūlaṃ,  
sabbarogamūlabandhanā pamutto,  
anuvīdita tādī pavuccate tathattā.*<sup>29</sup>

"Having understood name-and-form, which is a product of prolificity,  
And which is the root of all malady within and without,  
He is released from bondage to the root of all maladies,  
That Such-like-one is truly known as 'the one who has understood'."

Name-and-form is a product of *papañca*, the worldling's prolificity. We spoke of the reflection of a gem in a pond and the image of a dog on a plank across the stream.<sup>30</sup> One's grasp on one's world of name-and-form is something similar. Now as for the Buddha, he has truly comprehended the nature of name-and-form. Whatever maladies, complications and malignant conditions there are within beings and around them, the root cause of all that malady is this *papañca nāmarūpa*. To be free from it is to be 'such'. He is the one who has really understood.

If we are to say something in particular about the latency of perception, we have to pay special attention to the first discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The advice usually given to one who picks up the *Majjhima Nikāya* these days is to skip the very first *sutta*. Why? Because it is not easy to understand it. Even the monks to whom it was preached could not understand it and were displeased. 'It is too deep for us, leave it alone.'

But it must be pointed out that such an advice is not much different from asking one to learn a language without studying the alphabet. This is because the first discourse of the *Majjhima Nikāya*,

namely the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*, enshrines an extremely vital first principle in the entire field of Buddhist philosophy. Just as much as the first discourse of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, namely the *Brahmajālasutta*, is of great relevance to the question of views, even so the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* is extremely important for its relevance to the question of perception.

Now what is the basic theme of this discourse? There is a certain pattern in the way objects occur to the mind and are apperceived. This discourse lays bare that elementary pattern. The Buddha opens this discourse with the declaration, *sabbadhammamūlapariyāyaṃ vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi*,<sup>31</sup> "monks, I shall preach to you the basic pattern of behaviour of all mind objects."

In a nutshell, the discourse deals with twenty-four concepts, representative of concepts in the world. These are fitted into a schema to illustrate the attitude of four types of persons towards them.

The twenty-four concepts mentioned in the *sutta* are *paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo, bhūta, deva, Pajāpati, Brahma, Abhassara, Subhakinha, Vehapphala, abhibhū, ākāsañāñcāyatanaṃ, viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ, ākiñcañcāyatanaṃ, nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ, diṭṭhaṃ, sutaṃ, mutaṃ, viññātaṃ, ekattaṃ, nānattaṃ, sabbaṃ, Nibbānaṃ*. "Earth, water, fire, air, beings, gods, *Pajāpati, Brahma*, the *Abhassara Brahmas*, the *Subhakinha Brahmas*, the *Vehapphala Brahmas*, the overlord, the realm of infinite space, the realm of infinite consciousness, the realm of nothingness, the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the seen, the heard, the sensed, the cognised, unity, diversity, all, *Nibbāna*."

The discourse describes the differences of attitude in four types of persons with regard to each of these concepts. The four persons are:

- 1) An untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for the Noble Ones and is unskilled in their *Dhamma, assutavā puthujjana*.
- 2) A monk who is in higher training, whose mind has not yet reached the goal and who is aspiring to the supreme security from bondage, *bhikkhu sekho appattamānaso*.
- 3) An *arahant* with taints destroyed who has lived the holy life, done what has to be done, laid down the burden, reached the goal, destroyed the fetters of existence and who is completely liberated through final knowledge, *arahaṃ khīṇāsavo*.

4) The *Tathāgata*, accomplished and fully enlightened, *Tathāgato araham sammāsambuddho*.

Out of these, the second category comprises the Stream-winner, the Once-returner and the Non-returner. Though there are four types, according to the analysis of their attitudes, the last two can be regarded as one type, since their attitudes to those concepts are the same. So we might as well speak of three kinds of attitudes. Let us now try to understand the difference between them.

What is the world-view of the untaught ordinary person, the worldling? The Buddha describes it as follows: *Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito saññānāti. Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito saññatvā paṭhaviṃ maññati, paṭhaviyā maññati, paṭhavito maññati, 'paṭhaviṃ me'ti maññati, paṭhaviṃ abhinandati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Apariññātaṃ tassā'ti vadāmi.*

"He perceives earth as 'earth'. Having perceived earth as 'earth', he imagines 'earth' as such, he imagines 'on the earth', he imagines 'from the earth', he imagines 'earth is mine', he delights in earth. Why is that? I say that it is because he has not fully comprehended it."

The untaught ordinary person can do no better than to perceive earth as 'earth', since he is simply groping in the dark. So he perceives earth as 'earth' and goes on imagining, for which the word used here is *maññati*, methinks. One usually methinks when a simile or a metaphor occurs, as a figure of speech. But here it is something more than that. Here it refers to an indulgence in a deluded mode of thinking under the influence of craving, conceit and views. Perceiving earth as 'earth', he imagines earth to be substantially 'earth'.

Then he resorts to inflection, to make it flexible or amenable to his methinking. 'On the earth', 'from the earth', 'earth is mine', are so many subtle ways of methinking, with which he finally finds delight in the very concept of earth. The reason for all this is the fact that he has not fully comprehended it.

Then comes the world-view of the monk who is in higher training, that is, the *sekha*. *Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhijānāti. Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhiññāya paṭhaviṃ mā maññi, paṭhaviyā mā maññi, paṭhavito mā maññi, 'paṭhaviṃ me'ti mā maññi, paṭhaviṃ mābhinandati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Pariññeyyaṃ tassā'ti vadāmi.*

"He understands through higher knowledge earth as 'earth'. Having known through higher knowledge earth as 'earth', let him not imagine 'earth' as such, let him not imagine 'on the earth', let him not imagine 'from the earth', let him not imagine 'earth is mine', let him not delight in earth. Why is that? I say it is because it should be well comprehended by him." As for the monk who is in higher training, he does not merely perceive, but understands through higher knowledge.

Here we are against a peculiar expression, which is rather problematic, that is, *mā maññi*. The commentary simply glosses over with the words *maññatī'ti maññi*, taking it to mean the same as *maññati*, "imagines".<sup>32</sup> Its only explanation for the use of this peculiar expression in this context is that the *sekha*, or the one in higher training, has already done away with *diṭṭhimaññanā* or imagining in terms of views, though he still has imaginings through craving and conceit. So, for the commentary, *mā maññi* is a sort of mild recognition of residual imagining, a dilly-dally phrase. But this interpretation is not at all convincing.

Obviously enough the particle *mā* has a prohibitive sense here, and *mā maññi* means 'let one not imagine', or 'let one not entertain imaginings', *maññanā*. A clear instance of the use of this expression in this sense is found at the end of the *Samiddhisutta*, discussed in an earlier sermon.<sup>33</sup> Venerable *Samiddhi* answered Venerable *Sāriputta*'s catechism creditably and the latter acknowledged it with a "well-done", *sādhu sādhu*, but cautioned him not to be proud of it, *tena ca mā maññi*, "but do not be vain on account of it".<sup>34</sup>

The use of the prohibitive particle with reference to the worldview of the monk in higher training is quite apt, as he has to train himself in overcoming the tendency to go on imagining. For him it is a step of training towards full comprehension. That is why the Buddha concludes with the words "why is that? I say it is because it should be well comprehended by him."

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> Sv III 721.  
<sup>3</sup> Spk III 73.  
<sup>4</sup> Mp III 348.  
<sup>5</sup> A III 294, *Bhaddakasutta* and *Anutappiyasutta*.  
<sup>6</sup> Ps II 10.  
<sup>7</sup> M I 109, *Madhupīṇḍikasutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> M I 112, *Madhupīṇḍikasutta*.  
<sup>9</sup> Ps II 75.  
<sup>10</sup> S III 71, *Niruttipathasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> *Marīcikūpamā saññā* at S III 142, *Phenapīṇḍūpamasutta*.  
<sup>12</sup> M I 190, *MahāHatthipadopamasutta*.  
<sup>13</sup> D I 201, *Poṭṭhapādasutta*.  
<sup>14</sup> D I 195, *Poṭṭhapādasutta*.  
<sup>15</sup> *Paṭisotagāmi* at M I 168, *Ariyapariyesanasutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> Dh 37, *Cittavagga*; Dh-p-a I 301.  
<sup>17</sup> Dh 254, *Malavagga*.  
<sup>18</sup> S IV 370, *Asaṅkhatasamyutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> Sn 874, *Kalahavivādasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> Ud 77, *Papañcakhayasutta*.  
<sup>21</sup> Ud 77, *Papañcakhayasutta*.  
<sup>22</sup> Nett 37.  
<sup>23</sup> Ud-a 373.  
<sup>24</sup> S IV 71, *Adanta-aguttasutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> M I 108, *Madhupīṇḍikasutta*.  
<sup>26</sup> Sn 847, *Māgandiyasutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> S III 138, *Pupphasutta*.  
<sup>28</sup> M I 233, *CūḷaSaccakasutta*.  
<sup>29</sup> Sn 530, *Sabhiyasutta*.  
<sup>30</sup> See sermons 6 and 7 (dog simile) and sermon 9 (gem simile).  
<sup>31</sup> M I 1, *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.  
<sup>32</sup> Ps I 41.  
<sup>33</sup> See sermon 9.  
<sup>34</sup> A IV 386, *Samiddhisutta*.

# **Sermon - 13**



*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho  
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*<sup>1</sup>

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction".

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the thirteenth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

In our last sermon we attempted an exposition under the topic *sabbadhammamūlapariyāya*, "the basic pattern of behaviour of all mind objects", which constitutes the theme of the very first *sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, namely the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.<sup>2</sup>

We happened to mention that the discourse describes three different attitudes regarding twenty-four concepts such as earth, water, fire and air. We could however discuss only two of them the other day, namely the world view, or the attitude of the untaught ordinary person, and the attitude of the noble one, who is in higher training.

So today, to begin with, let us bring up the third type of attitude given in the discourse, that is, the attitude of *arahants* and that of the *Tathāgata*, both being similar. It is described in these words:

*Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhijānāti, paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhiññāya  
paṭhaviṃ na maññati, paṭhaviyā na maññati, paṭhavito na maññati,  
'paṭhaviṃ me'ti na maññati, paṭhaviṃ nābhinandati. Taṃ kissa  
hetu? 'Pariññātaṃ tassā'ti vadāmi.*

"The *arahant* (as well as the *Tathāgata*) understands through higher knowledge earth as 'earth', having understood through higher knowledge earth as 'earth', he does not imagine earth to be 'earth', he does not imagine 'on the earth', he does not imagine 'from the earth', he does not imagine 'earth is mine', he does not delight in earth. Why is that? I say, it is because it has been well comprehended by him."

Let us now try to compare and contrast these three attitudes, so that we can understand them in greater detail. The attitude of the un-

taught ordinary person in regard to any of the twenty-four concepts like earth, water, fire, air (the twenty-four cited being illustrations), is so oriented that he perceives it as such.

For instance in the case of earth, he perceives a real earth, that is, takes it as earth per se. It may sometimes be only a block of ice, but because it is hard to the touch, he grasps it as 'earth'. Thus the ordinary person, the worldling, relies only on perception in his pursuit of knowledge. Having perceived earth as 'earth', he imagines it to be 'earth'. The peculiarity of *maññanā*, or 'me'-thinking, is that it is an imagining in terms of 'I' and 'mine'.

So he first imagines it as 'earth', then he imagines 'on the earth', 'from the earth', 'earth is mine' and delights in the earth. Here we find various flexional forms known to grammar.

As a matter of fact, grammar itself is a product of the worldlings for purposes of transaction in ideas bound up with defilements. Its purpose is to enable beings, who are overcome by the personality view, to communicate with their like-minded fellow beings. Grammar, therefore, is something that caters to their needs. As such, it embodies certain misconceptions, some of which have been highlighted in this context.

For instance, *paṭhaviṃ maññati* could be interpreted as an attempt to imagine an earth - as a full-fledged noun or substantive. It is conceived as something substantial. By *paṭhaviyā maññāti*, "he imagines 'on the earth'", the locative case is implied; while '*paṭhaviṃ me'ti maññati*', "he imagines 'earth is mine'", is an instance of the genitive case, expressing the idea of possession.

Due to such imaginings, a reality is attributed to the concept of 'earth' and its existence is taken for granted. In other words, these various forms of imaginings go to confirm the notion already aroused by the concept of 'earth'. Once it is confirmed one can delight in it, *paṭhaviṃ abhinandati*. This, then, is the worldview of the untaught ordinary person.

The other day we mentioned that the monk who is in higher training understands through higher knowledge, not through perception, earth as 'earth'. Though it is a higher level of understanding, he is not totally free from imaginings. That is why certain peculiar expressions are used in connection with him, such as *paṭaviṃ mā maññi*,

*paṭhaviyā mā maññi, paṭhavito mā maññi, 'paṭhaviṃ me'ti mā maññi, paṭhaviṃ mā abhinandi.*

Here we have to call in question the commentarial explanation. According to the commentary, this peculiar expression had to be used as a dilly dally phrase, because the monk in higher training could not be said to imagine or not imagine.<sup>3</sup> But it is clear enough that the particle *mā* in this context is used in its prohibitive sense. *Mā maññi* means "do not imagine!", and *mā abhinandi* means "do not delight!".

What is significant about the *sekha*, the monk in higher training, is that he is in a stage of voluntary training. In fact, the word *sekha* literally means a "learner". That is to say, he has obtained a certain degree of higher understanding but has not attained as yet full comprehension.

It is precisely for that reason that the section about him is summed up by the statement: *Taṃ kissa hetu? Pariññeyyaṃ tassā'ti vadāmi.* "Why is that? Because, I say, that it should be comprehended by him." Since he has yet to comprehend it, he is following that course of higher training. The particle *mā* is therefore a pointer to that effect. For example, *mā maññi* "do not imagine!", *mā abhinandi* "do not delight!".

In other words, the monk in higher training cannot help using the grammatical structure in usage among the worldlings and as his latencies are not extinct as yet, he has to practise a certain amount of restraint. By constant employment of mindfulness and wisdom he makes an attempt to be immune to the influence of the worldling's grammatical structure.

There is a possibility that he would be carried away by the implications of such concepts as earth, water, fire and air, in his communications with the world regarding them. So he strives to proceed towards full comprehension with the help of the higher understanding already won, keeping mindfulness and wisdom before him. That is the voluntary training implied here.

The monk in higher training is called *attagutto*, in the sense that he tries to guard himself.<sup>4</sup> Such phrases like *mā maññi* indicate that voluntary training in guarding himself. Here we had to add some-

thing more to the commentarial explanation. So this is the situation with the monk in higher training.

Now as to the *arahant* and the *Tathāgata*, the world views of both are essentially the same. That is to say, they both have a higher knowledge as well as a full comprehension with regard to the concept of earth, for instance. *Pariññātaṃ tassā'ti vadāmi*, "I say it has been comprehended by him".

As such, they are not carried away by the implications of the worldlings' grammatical structure. They make use of the worldly usage much in the same way as parents do when they are speaking in their child's language. They are not swept away by it. There is no inner entanglement in the form of imagining. There is no attachment, entanglement and involvement by way of craving, conceit and view, in regard to those concepts.

All this goes to show the immense importance of the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*. One can understand why this *sutta* came to be counted as the first among the *suttas* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It is as if this *sutta* was intended to serve as the alphabet in deciphering the words used by the Buddha in his sermons delivered in discursive style. As a matter of fact the *Majjhima Nikāya* in particular is a text abounding in deep *suttas*. This way we can understand why both higher knowledge and full comprehension are essential.

We have shown above that this discourse bears some relation to the grammatical structure. Probably due to a lack of recognition of this relationship between the modes of imagining and the grammatical structure, the commentators were confronted with a problem while commenting upon this discourse.

Such phrases as *paṭhaviṃ maññati* and *paṭhaviyā maññati* occur all over this discourse in referring to various ways of imagining. The commentator, however, always makes it a point to interpret these ways of imagining with reference to craving, conceit and views. So when he comes to the phrase *mā abhinandi*, he finds it to be superfluous. That is why Venerable *Buddhaghosa* treats it as a repetition and poses a possible question as follows:

‘Paṭhaviṃ maññatī’ti’ eteneva etasmiṃ atthe siddhe kasmā evaṃ vuttanti ce. Avicāritaṃ etaṃ porāṇehi. Ayaṃ pana me attano matī, desanāvilāsato vā ādīnavadassanato vā.<sup>5</sup>

Now this is how the commentator poses his own problem: When the phrase *paṭhaviṃ maññati* by itself fulfils the purpose, why is it that an additional phrase like *paṭhaviṃ abhinandati* is brought in? That is to say, if the imagining already implies craving, conceit and views, what is the justification for the concluding phrase *paṭhaviṃ abhinandati*, "he delights in earth", since craving already implies a form of delighting?

So he takes it as a repetition and seeks for a justification. He confesses that the ancients have not handed down an explanation and offers his own personal opinion on it, *ayaṃ pana me attano matī*, "but then this is my own opinion".

And what does his own explanation amount to? *Desanāvilāsato vā ādīnavadassanato vā*, "either as a particular style in preaching, or by way of showing the perils of the ways of imagining". He treats it as yet another way of preaching peculiar to the Buddha, or else as an attempt to emphasize the perils of imagining.

However, going by the explanation we have already given above, relating these modes of imagining to the structure of grammar, we can come to a conclusion as to why the phrase *mā abhinandi* was brought in. The reason is that each of those concepts crystallized into a real thing as a result of imagining, based on the framework of grammar. It received real object status in the world of imagination. Once its object status got confirmed, one can certainly delight in it. It became a thing in truth and fact. The purpose of these ways of imagining is to mould it into a thing.

Let us go deeper into this problem. There is, for instance, a certain recurrent passage in the discourses on the subject of sense restraint.<sup>6</sup> The gist of that passage amounts to this: A person with defilements takes in signs and features through all the six sense doors, inclusive of the mind. Due to that grasping at signs and features, various kinds of influxes are said to flow in, according to the passages outlining the practice of sense restraint. From this we can well infer that the role of *maññanā*, or imagining, is to grasp at signs with regard to the objects of the mind.

That is to say, the mind apperceives its object as ‘something’, *dhammasaññā*. The word *dhamma* in the opening sentence of this *sutta*, *sabbadhammamūlapariyāyaṃ vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi*, means a ‘thing’, since every-thing is an object of the mind in the last analysis.

*Paṭhaviṃ maññāti*, "he imagines earth as earth", is suggestive of a grasping at the sign in regard to objects of the mind. Thinking in such terms as *paṭhaviyā maññāti*, *paṭhavito maññāti*, and ‘*paṭhaviṃ me’ti maññāti*, "he imagines ‘on the earth’, he imagines ‘from the earth’, he imagines ‘earth is mine’", are like the corroborative features that go to confirm that sign already grasped.

The two terms *nimitta*, sign, and *anuvyañjana*, feature, in the context of sense restraint have to be understood in this way. Now the purpose of a *nimitta*, or sign, is to give a hazy idea like ‘this may be so’. It receives confirmation with the help of corroborative features, *anuvyañjana*, all the features that are accessory to the sign. The corroboration comes, for instance, in this manner: ‘This goes well with this, this accords with this, therefore the sign I took is right’. So even on the basis of instructions on sense restraint, we can understand the special significance of this *maññanā*, or ‘me’-thinking.

The reason for the occurrence of these different ways of me-thinking can also be understood. In this discourse the Buddha is presenting a certain philosophy of the grammatical structure. The structure of grammar is a contrivance for conducting the worldlings’ thought process, characterised by the perception of permanence, as well as for communication of ideas arising out of that process.

The grammatical structure invests words with life, as it were. This mode of hypostasizing is revealed in the nouns and substantives implying such notions as ‘in it’, ‘by it’ and ‘from it’. The last of the flexional forms, the vocative case, *he paṭhavi*, "hey earth", effectively illustrates this hypostasizing character of grammar. It is even capable of infusing life into the concept of ‘earth’ and arousing it with the words "hey earth".

In an earlier sermon we had occasion to refer to a legend in which a tiger was reconstituted and resurrected out of its skeletal remains.<sup>7</sup> The structure of grammar seems to be capable of a similar feat. The *Mūlapariyāyasutta* gives us an illustration of this fact.

It is because of the obsessional character of this *maññanā*, or me-thinking, that the Buddha has presented this *Mūlapariyāyasutta* to the world as the basic pattern or paradigm representing three types of world views, or the world views of three types of persons.

This discourse deals with the untaught ordinary person, who is obsessed by this grammatical structure, the disciple in higher training, who is trying to free himself from its grip, and the emancipated one, completely free from it, at the same time giving their respective world views as well.

The other day we enumerated the list of twenty-four concepts, presented in that discourse. Out of these concepts, we have to pay special attention to the fact that *Nibbāna* is counted as the last, since it happens to be the theme of all our sermons.

Regarding this concept of *Nibbāna* too, the worldling is generally tempted to entertain some kind of *maññanā*, or me-thinking. Even some philosophers are prone to that habit. They indulge in some sort of prolific conceptualisation and me-thinking on the basis of such conventional usages as ‘in *Nibbāna*’, ‘from *Nibbāna*’, ‘on reaching *Nibbāna*’ and ‘my *Nibbāna*’. By hypostasizing *Nibbāna* they develop a substance view, even of this concept, just as in the case of *paṭhavi*, or earth. Let us now try to determine whether this is justifiable.

The primary sense of the word *Nibbāna* is ‘extinction’, or ‘extinguishment’. We have already discussed this point with reference to such contexts as *Aggivacchagottasutta*.<sup>8</sup> In that discourse the Buddha explained the term *Nibbāna* to the wandering ascetic *Vacchagotta* with the help of a simile of the extinction of a fire. Simply because a fire is said to go out, one should not try to trace it, wondering where it has gone. The term *Nibbāna* is essentially a verbal noun. We also came across the phrase *nibbuto tveva saṅkhaṃ gacchati*, "it is reckoned as ‘extinguished’".<sup>9</sup>

As we have already pointed out in a previous sermon, *saṅkhā*, *samaññā* and *paññatti*, ‘reckoning’, ‘appellation’ and ‘designation’ are more or less synonymous.<sup>10</sup> *Saṅkhaṃ gacchati* only means "comes to be reckoned". *Nibbāna* is therefore some sort of reckoning, an appellation or designation. The word *Nibbāna*, according to the *Aggivacchagottasutta*, is a designation or a concept.

But the commentator takes much pains to prove that the *Nibbāna* mentioned at the end of the list in the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* refers not to our orthodox *Nibbāna*, but to a concept of *Nibbāna* upheld by heretics.<sup>11</sup> The commentator, it seems, is at pains to salvage our *Nibbāna*, but his attempt is at odds with the trend of this discourse, because the *sekha*, or the monk in higher training, has no need to train himself in refraining from delighting in any heretical *Nibbāna*. So here too, the reference is to our orthodox *Nibbāna*.

Presumably the commentator could not understand why the *arahaṇts* do not delight in *Nibbāna*. For instance, in the section on the *Tathāgata* one reads: *Nibbānaṃ nābhinandati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Nandi dukkhassa mūlan'ti iti viditvā, bhavā jāti, bhūtaṃ jarāmaraṇaṃ*. "He does not delight in *Nibbāna*. Why so? Because he knows that delighting is the root of suffering, and from becoming comes birth and to the one become there is decay-and-death."

It seems, then, that the *Tathāgata* does not delight in *Nibbāna*, because delighting is the root of suffering. Now *nandi* is a form of grasping, *upādāna*, impelled by craving. It is sometimes expressly called an *upādāna*: *Yā vedanāsu nandi tadupādānaṃ*, "whatever delighting there is in feeling, that is a grasping."<sup>12</sup> Where there is delighting, there is a grasping. Where there is grasping, there is *bhava*, becoming or existence. From becoming comes birth, and to the one who has thus come to be there is decay-and-death.

It is true that we project the concept of *Nibbāna* as an objective to aim at in our training. But if we grasp it like the concept of earth and start indulging in me-thinkings or imaginings about it, we would never be able to realize it. Why? Because what we have here is an extraordinary path leading to an emancipation from all concepts, *nissāya nissāya oghassa nittharaṇā*, "crossing over the flood with relative dependence".<sup>13</sup>

Whatever is necessary is made use of, but there is no grasping in terms of craving, conceits and views. That is why even with reference to the *Tathāgata* the phrase *Nibbānaṃ nābhinandati*, "he does not delight in *Nibbāna*", occurs in this discourse.

One might ask: 'What is wrong in delighting in *Nibbāna*?' But then we might recall a pithy dialogue already quoted in an earlier sermon.<sup>14</sup> A deity comes and accosts the Buddha: "Do you rejoice, re-



cluse?" And the Buddha responds: "On getting what, friend?" Then the deity asks: "Well then, recluse, do you grieve?" And the Buddha retorts: "On losing what, friend?" The deity now mildly remarks: "So then, recluse, you neither rejoice nor grieve!" And the Buddha confirms it with the assent: "That is so, friend."<sup>15</sup>

This then is the attitude of the Buddha and the *arahants* to the concept of *Nibbāna*. There is nothing to delight in it, only equanimity is there.

Seen in this perspective, the word *Nibbāna* mentioned in the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* need not be taken as referring to a concept of *Nibbāna* current among heretics. The reference here is to our own orthodox *Nibbāna* concept. But the attitude towards it must surely be changed in the course of treading the path to it.

If, on the contrary, one grasps it tenaciously and takes it to be substantial, presuming that the word is a full fledged noun, and goes on to argue it out on the basis of logic and proliferate on it conceptually, it will no longer be our *Nibbāna*. There one slips into wrong view. One would never be able to extricate oneself from wrong view that way. Here then is an issue of crucial importance.

Many philosophers start their exposition with an implicit acceptance of conditionality. But when they come to the subject of *Nibbāna*, they have recourse to some kind of instrumentality. "On reaching *Nibbāna*, lust and delight are abandoned."<sup>16</sup> Commentators resort to such explanations under the influence of *maññanā*. They seem to imply that *Nibbāna* is instrumental in quenching the fires of defilement. To say that the fires of defilements are quenched by *Nibbāna*, or on arriving at it, is to get involved in a circular argument. It is itself an outcome of *papañca*, or conceptual prolificity, and betrays an enslavement to the syntax.

When one says 'the river flows', it does not mean that there is a river quite apart from the act of flowing. Likewise the idiom 'it rains' should not be taken to imply that there is something that rains. It is only a turn of speech, fulfilling a certain requirement of the grammatical structure.

On an earlier occasion we happened to discuss some very important aspects of the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*.<sup>17</sup> We saw how the Buddha presented a philosophy of language, which seems so extraordinary even

to modern thinkers. This *Mūlapariyāyasutta* also brings out a similar attitude to the linguistic medium.

Such elements of a language as nouns and verbs reflect the worldling's mode of thinking. As in the case of a child's imagination, a noun appears as a must. So it has to rain for there to be rain. The implicit verbal sense becomes obscured, or else it is ignored. A periphrastic usage receives acceptance. So the rain rains, and the river flows. A natural phenomenon becomes mystified and hypostasized.

Anthropomorphism is a characteristic of the pre-historic man's philosophy of life. Wherever there was an activity, he imagined some form of life. This animistic trend of thought is evident even in the relation between the noun and the verb. The noun has adjectives as attributes and the verb has adverbs to go with it. Particles fall in between, and there we have what is called grammar. If one imagines that the grammar of language must necessarily conform to the grammar of nature, one falls into a grievous error.

Now the commentators also seem to have fallen into such an error in their elaborate exegesis on *Nibbāna*, due to a lack of understanding of this philosophy of language. That is why the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* now finds itself relegated, though it is at the head of the *suttas* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

It is in the nature of concepts that nouns are invested with a certain amount of permanence. Even a verbal noun, once it is formed, gets a degree of permanence more or less superimposed on it. When one says 'the river flows', one somehow tends to forget the flowing nature of the so-called river. This is the result of the perception of permanence.

As a matter of fact, perception as such carries with it the notion of permanence, as we mentioned in an earlier sermon.<sup>18</sup> To perceive is to grasp a sign. One can grasp a sign only where one imagines some degree of permanence.

The purpose of perception is not only to recognize for oneself, but also to make it known to others. The Buddha has pointed out that there is a very close relationship between recognition and communication. This fact is expressly stated by the Buddha in the following quotation from the Sixes of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*:

*Vohāravepakkam ahaṃ, bhikkhave, saññam vadāmi. Yathā yathā naṃ sañjānāti, tathā tathā voharati, evaṃ saññī ahoṣin'ti.* "Monks, I say that perception has linguistic usage as its result. In whatever way one perceives, so one speaks out about it, saying: 'I was of such a perception' ".<sup>19</sup>

The word *vepakka* is a derivative from the word *vipāka*, which in the context of *kamma*, or ethically significant action, generally means the result of that action. In this context, however, its primary sense is evident, that is, as some sort of a ripening. In other words, what this quotation implies is that perception ripens or matures into verbal usage or convention.

So here we see the connection between *saññā*, perception, and *saṅkhā*, reckoning. This throws more light on our earlier explanation of the last line of a verse in the *Kalahavivādasutta*, namely *saññāni-dānā hi papañcasāṅkhā*, "for reckonings born of prolificity have perception as their source".<sup>20</sup>

So now we are in a better position to appreciate the statement that linguistic usages, reckonings and designations are the outcome of perception. All this goes to show that an insight into the philosophy of language is essential for a proper understanding of this *Dhamma*. This is the moral behind the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.

Beings are usually dominated by these reckonings, appellations and designations, because the perception of permanence is inherent in them. It is extremely difficult for one to escape it. Once the set of such terms as milk, curd and butter comes into vogue, the relation between them becomes an insoluble problem even for the great philosophers.

Since we have been talking about the concept of *Nibbāna* so much, one might ask: 'So then, *Nibbāna* is not an absolute, *paramattha*?' It is not a *paramattha* in the sense of an absolute. It is a *paramattha* only in the sense that it is the highest good, *parama attha*. This is the sense in which the word was used in the discourses,<sup>21</sup> though it has different connotations now. As exemplified by such quotations as *āraddhaviriyo paramatthapattiya*,<sup>22</sup> "with steadfast energy for the attainment of the highest good", the *suttas* speak of *Nibbāna* as the highest good to be attained.

In later Buddhist thought, however, the word *paramattha* came to acquire absolutist connotations, due to which some important discourses of the Buddha on the question of worldly appellations, worldly expressions and worldly designations fell into disuse. This led to an attitude of dwelling in the scaffolding, improvised just for the purpose of constructing a building.

As a postscript to our exposition of the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* we may add the following important note: This particular discourse is distinguished from all other discourses in respect of one significant feature. That is, the concluding statement to the effect that the monks who listened to the sermon were not pleased by it.

Generally we find at the end of a discourse a more or less thematic sentence like *attamanā te bhikkhū Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandum*, "those monks were pleased and they rejoiced in the words of the Exalted One".<sup>23</sup> But in this *sutta* we find the peculiar ending *idaṃ avoca Bhagavā, na te bhikkhū Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandum*, "the Exalted One said this, but those monks did not rejoice in the words of the Exalted One".<sup>24</sup>

Commentators seem to have interpreted this attitude as an index to the abstruseness of the discourse.<sup>25</sup> This is probably why this discourse came to be neglected in the course of time. But on the basis of the exposition we have attempted, we might advance a different interpretation of the attitude of those monks. The declaration that none of the concepts, including that of *Nibbāna*, should be egoistically imagined, could have caused displeasure in monks, then as now. So much, then, for the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.

The Buddha has pointed out that this *maññanā*, or egoistic imagining, or me-thinking, is an extremely subtle bond of *Māra*. A discourse which highlights this fact comes in the *Samyutta Nikāya* under the title *Yavakalāpisutta*.<sup>26</sup> In this discourse the Buddha brings out this fact with the help of a parable. It concerns the battle between gods and demons, which is a theme that comes up quite often in the discourses.

In a war between gods and demons, the gods are victorious and the demons are defeated. The gods bind *Vepacitti*, the king of the demons, in a fivefold bondage, that is, hands and feet and neck, and bring him before *Sakka*, the king of the gods.

This bondage has a strange mechanism about it. When *Vepacitti* thinks ‘gods are righteous, demons are unrighteous, I will go to the *deva* world’, he immediately finds himself free from that bondage and capable of enjoying the heavenly pleasures of the five senses. But as soon as he slips into the thought ‘gods are unrighteous, demons are righteous, I will go back to the *asura* world’, he finds himself divested of the heavenly pleasures and bound again by the five-fold bonds.

After introducing this parable, the Buddha comes out with a deep disquisition of *Dhamma* for which it serves as a simile. *Evaṃ sukhumamā kho, bhikkhave, Vepacittibandhanaṃ. Tato sukhumataraṃ Mārabandhanaṃ. Maññamāno kho, bhikkhave, baddho Mārassa, amaññamāno mutto pāpimato. Asmī’ti, bhikkhave, maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘ayaṃ ahaṃ asmī’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘na bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘rūpī bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘arūpī bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘saññī bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘asaññī bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, ‘nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissan’ti maññitaṃ etaṃ. Maññitaṃ, bhikkhave, rogo, maññitaṃ gaṇḍo, maññitaṃ sallāṃ. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, ‘amaññamānena cetasā viharissāmā’ti evaṃhi vo, bhikkhave, sikkhitabbaṃ.*

"So subtle, monks, is the bondage of *Vepacitti*. But more subtle still is the bondage of *Māra*. Imagining, monks, one is bound by *Māra*, not imagining one is freed from the Evil One. ‘Am’, monks, is an imagining, ‘this am I’ is an imagining, ‘I shall be’ is an imagining, ‘I shall not be’ is an imagining, ‘I shall be one with form’ is an imagining, ‘I shall be formless’ is an imagining, ‘I shall be percipient’ is an imagining, ‘I shall be non-percipient’ is an imagining, ‘I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient’ is an imagining. Imagining, monks, is a disease, imagining is an abscess, imagining is a barb, therefore, monks, should you tell yourselves: ‘We shall dwell with a mind free from imaginings, thus should you train yourselves’."

First of all, let us try to get at the meaning of this exhortation. The opening sentence is an allusion to the simile given above. It says that the bondage in which *Vepacitti* finds himself is of a subtle nature, that is to say, it is a bondage connected with his thoughts. Its very mechanism is dependent on his thoughts.

But then the Buddha declares that the bondage of *Māra* is even subtler. And what is this bondage of *Māra*? "Imagining, monks, one is bound by *Māra*, not imagining one is freed from that Evil One." Then comes a list of nine different ways of imaginings.

In the same discourse the Buddha goes on to qualify each of these imaginings with four significant terms, namely *īñjitaṃ*, agitation *phanditaṃ*, palpitation, *papañcitaṃ*, proliferation, and *mānagataṃ*, conceit.

*Īñjitaṃ* is an indication that these forms of imaginings are the outcome of craving, since *ejā* is a synonym for *taṇhā*, or craving.

*Phanditaṃ* is an allusion to the fickleness of the mind, as for instance conveyed by the first line of a verse in the *Dhammapada*, *phandanaṃ capalaṃ cittaṃ*, "the mind, palpitating and fickle".<sup>27</sup> The fickle nature of the mind brings out those imaginings.

They are also the products of proliferation, *papañcita*. We have already discussed the meaning of the term *papañca*.<sup>28</sup> We happened to point out that it is a sort of straying away from the proper path.

*Mānagataṃ* is suggestive of a measuring. *Asmi*, or 'am', is the most elementary standard of measurement. It is the peg from which all measurements take their direction. As we pointed out in an earlier sermon, the grammatical structure of language is based on this peg 'am'.<sup>29</sup>

In connection with the three persons, first person, second person and third person, we happened to mention that as soon as one grants 'I am', a 'here' is born. It is only after a 'here' is born, that a 'there' and a 'yonder' come to be. The first person gives rise to the second and the third person, to complete the basic framework for grammar.

So *asmi*, or 'am', is itself a product of proliferation. In fact, the deviation from the proper path, implied by the proliferation in *pa-pañca*, is a result of these multifarious imaginings.

It is in the nature of these imaginings that as soon as an imagining or a me-thinking occurs, a thing is born as a matter of course. And with the birth of a thing as 'something', impermanence takes over. That is to say, it comes under the sway of impermanence. This is a very strange phenomenon. It is only after becoming a 'something' that it can become 'another thing'. *Aññathābhāva*, or otherwiseness,

implies a change from one state to another. A change of state already presupposes some state or other, and that is what is called a ‘thing’.

Now where does a ‘thing’ arise? It arises in the mind. As soon as something gets hold of the mind, that thing gets infected with the germ of impermanence.

The modes of imagining listed above reveal a double bind. There is no freedom either way. Whether one imagines ‘I shall be with form’ or ‘I shall be formless’, one is in a dichotomy. It is the same with the two ways of imagining ‘I shall be percipient’, ‘I shall be non-percipient’.

We had occasion to refer to this kind of dichotomy while explaining the significance of quite a number of discourses. The root of all this duality is the thought ‘am’.

The following two verses from the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* throw light on some subtle aspects of *maññanā*, or imagining:

*Yena yena hi maññanti,  
tato taṃ hoti aññathā,  
taṃ hi tassa musā hoti,  
mosadhammaṃ hi ittaraṃ.  
Amosadhammaṃ Nibbānaṃ,  
tad ariyā saccato vidū,  
te ve saccābhisamayā,  
nicchātā parinibbutā.*

"In whatever way they imagine,  
Thereby it turns otherwise,  
That itself is the falsity  
Of this puerile deceptive thing.  
*Nibbāna* is unfalsifying in its nature,  
That they understood as the truth,  
And indeed by the higher understanding of that truth  
They have become hungerless and fully appeased."<sup>30</sup>

The first verse makes it clear that imagining is at the root of *añña-thābhāva*, or otherwiseness, in so far as it creates a thing out of nothing. As soon as a thing is conceived in the mind by imagining, the germ of otherwiseness or change enters into it at its very conception.

So a thing is born only to become another thing, due to the other-wiseness in nature. To grasp a thing tenaciously is to exist with it, and birth, decay and death are the inexorable vicissitudes that go with it.

The second verse says that *Nibbāna* is known as the truth, because it is of an unfalsifying nature. Those who have understood it are free from the hunger of craving. The word *parinibbuta* in this context does not mean that those who have realized the truth have passed away. It only conveys the idea of full appeasement or a quenching of that hunger.

Why is *Nibbāna* regarded as unfalsifying? Because there is no ‘thing’ in it. It is so long as there is a thing that all the distress and misery follow. *Nibbāna* is called *animitta*, or the signless, precisely because there is no-thing in it.

Because it is signless, it is unestablished, *appaṇihita*. Only where there is an establishment can there be a dislodgement. Since it is not liable to dislodgement or disintegration, it is unshakeable. It is called *akuppā cetovimutti*, unshakeable deliverance of the mind,<sup>31</sup> because of its unshaken and stable nature. Due to the absence of craving there is no directional aspiration, or *paṇidhi*.

Similarly *suññata*, or voidness, is a term implying that there is no essence in *Nibbāna* in the substantial sense in which the worldlings use that term. As mentioned in the *MahāSāropamasutta*, deliverance itself is the essence.<sup>32</sup> Apart from that, there is nothing essential or substantial in *Nibbāna*. In short, there is no thing to become otherwise in *Nibbāna*.

On an earlier occasion, too, we had to mention the fact that there is quite a lot of confusion in this concern.<sup>33</sup> *Saṅkhata*, the compounded, is supposed to be a thing. And *asaṅkhata*, or the un-compounded, is also a thing. The compounded is an impermanent thing, while the un-compounded is a permanent thing. The compounded is fraught with suffering, and the un-compounded is blissful. The compounded is not self, but the un-compounded is ... At this point the line of argument breaks off.

Some of those who attempt this kind of explanation find themselves in a quandary due to their lack of understanding of the issues



involved. The two verses quoted above are therefore highly significant.

Because of *maññanā*, worldlings tend to grasp, hold on and adhere to mind-objects. The Buddha has presented these concepts just for the purpose of crossing over the flood, *desitā nissāya nissāya oghassa nittharaṇā*, "the process of crossing over the flood with relative dependence has been preached".<sup>34</sup> All the *dharmas* that have been preached are for a practical purpose, based on an understanding of their relative value, and not for grasping tenaciously, as illustrated by such discourses like the *Rathavinītasutta* and the *Alagaddūpamasutta*.<sup>35</sup>

Let alone other concepts, not even *Nibbāna* as a concept is to be grasped. To grasp the concept of *Nibbāna* is to slip into an error. So from the couplet quoted above we clearly understand how subtle this *maññanā* is and why it is called an extremely subtle bondage of *Māra*.

It might be recalled that while discussing the significance of the *Brahmanimantanikasutta* we mentioned that the non-manifestative consciousness described in that discourse does not partake of the earthiness of earth.<sup>36</sup> That is to say, it is not under the sway of the earth quality of earth.

In fact as many as thirteen out of the twenty-four concepts mentioned in the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* come up again in the *Brahmanimantanikasutta*. The implication therefore is that the non-manifestative consciousness is not subject to the influence of any of those concepts. It does not take any of those concepts as substantial or essential, and that is why it is beyond their power.

For the same reason it is called the non-manifestative consciousness. Consciousness as a rule takes hold of some object or other. This consciousness, however, is called non-manifestative in the sense that it is devoid of the nature of grasping any such object. It finds no object worthy of grasping.

What we have discussed so far could perhaps be better appreciated in the light of another important *sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, namely the *Cūḷataṇhāsāṅkhasutta*. A key to the moral behind this discourse is to be found in the following dictum occurring in it: *sab-*

*be dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*, "nothing is worth entering into dogmatically".<sup>37</sup>

The word *abhinivesa*, suggestive of dogmatic adherence, literally means "entering into". Now based on this idea we can bring in a relevant metaphor.

We happened to mention earlier that as far as concepts are concerned, the *arahants* have no dogmatic adherence. Let us take, for instance, the concept of 'a house'. *Arahants* also enter a house, but they do not enter into the concept of 'a house'. This statement might appear rather odd, but what we mean is that one can enter a house without entering into the concept of 'a house'.

Now leaving this as something of a riddle, let us try to analyse a certain fairy tale-like episode in the *Cūḷataṇhāsāṅkhasutta*, somewhat as an interlude.

The main theme of the *Cūḷataṇhāsāṅkhasutta* is as follows: Once *Sakka*, the king of the gods, came to see the Buddha when he was staying at *Pubbārāma* and asked the question: 'How does a monk attain deliverance by the complete destruction of craving?' The quintessence of the Buddha's brief reply to that question is the above mentioned dictum, *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*, "nothing is worth entering into dogmatically".

*Sakka* rejoiced in this sermon approvingly and left. Venerable *MahāMoggallāna*, who was seated near the Buddha at that time, had the inquisitive thought: 'Did *Sakka* rejoice in this sermon having understood it, or did he rejoice without understanding it?' Being curious to find this out he vanished from *Pubbārāma* and appeared in the *Tāvātimsa* heaven as quickly as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm and bend back his outstretched arm.

At that time *Sakka* was enjoying heavenly music. On seeing Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* coming at a distance he stopped the music and welcomed the latter, saying: 'Come good sir *Moggallāna*, welcome good sir *Moggallāna*! It is a long time, good sir *Moggallāna*, since you found an opportunity to come here.'

He offered a high seat to Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* and took a low seat at one side. Then Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* asked *Sakka* what sort of a sermon the Buddha had preached to him on his recent visit, saying that he himself is curious on listening to it.

*Sakka's* reply was: 'Good sir *Moggallāna*, we are so busy, we have so much to do, not only with our own business, but also with the business of other gods of *Tāvatiṃsa*. So it is not easy for us to remember such *Dhamma* discussions.' Then *Sakka* goes on to relate some other episode, which to him seems more important: 'After winning the war against the *asuras*, I had the *Vejayanti* palace built. Would you like to see it, good sir *Moggallāna*?'

Probably as a part of etiquette, binding on a visitor, Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* agreed and *Sakka* conducted him around the *Vejayanti* palace in the company of his friend, king *Vessavaṇa*. It was a wonderful palace with hundreds of towers. *Sakka's* maids, seeing Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* coming in the distance, were embarrassed out of modest respect and went into their rooms. *Sakka* was taking Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* around, saying: 'See, good sir, how lovely this palace is.'

Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* also courteously responded, saying that it is a fitting gift for his past merit. But then he thought of arousing a sense of urgency in *Sakka*, seeing: how negligent he has become now. And what did he do? He shook the *Vejayanti* palace with the point of his toe, using his supernormal power.

Since *Sakka* had 'entered into' the *Vejayanti* palace with his craving, conceit and views, he also was thoroughly shaken, along with the palace. That is to say, a sense of urgency was aroused in him, so much so that he remembered the sermon the Buddha had preached to him.

It was then that Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* asked *Sakka* pointedly: 'How did the Exalted One state to you in brief the deliverance through the destruction of craving?' *Sakka* came out with the full account, creditably.

So after all it seems that the Venerable *MahāMoggallāna* took all this trouble to drive home into *Sakka* the moral of the sermon *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*, "nothing is worth clinging onto".

If one goes through this discourse ignoring the deeper aspects of it, it appears merely as a fairy tale. Even as those heavenly maidens entered their rooms, *Sakka* also had entered into this *Vejayanti* palace of his own creation, while showing his distinguished visitor around,

like a rich man these days after building his mansion.

So from this we can see the nature of these worldly concepts. For instance, in the case of the concept of ‘a house’, entering the house physically does not necessarily mean that one is ‘in it’. Only if one has entered into the concept of a house is he ‘in it’.

Let us take a simply analogy. Little children sometimes build a little hut, out of fun, with a few sticks and shady leaves. They might even invite their mother for the house-warming. When the mother creeps into the improvised hut, she does not seriously entertain the concept of ‘a house’ in it, as the children would do.

It is the same in the case of Buddhas and *arahants*. To the Emancipated Ones, who have fully understood and comprehended the true meaning of concepts like ‘house’, ‘mansion’ and ‘palace’, the sand-castles of adults appear no better than the playthings of little children. We have to grant it, therefore, that *Tathāgatas*, or Such-like Ones, cannot help making use of concepts in worldly usage.

As a matter of fact, once a certain deity even raised the question whether the emancipated *arahant* monks, when they use such expressions as ‘I speak’ and ‘they speak to me’, do so out of conceit. The Buddha’s reply was:

*Yo hoti bhikkhu araham katāvī,  
khīṇāsavo antimadehadhārī,  
‘aham vadāmī’ti pi so vadeyya,  
‘mamaṃ vadantī’ti pi so vadeyya  
loke samaññaṃ kusalo viditvā,  
vohāramattena so vohareyyā.*

"That monk, who is an *arahant*, who has finished his task,  
Whose influxes are extinct and who bears his final body,  
Might still say ‘I speak’,  
He might also say ‘they speak to me’,  
Being skilful, knowing the world’s parlance,  
He uses such terms merely as a convention."<sup>38</sup>

In the case of an *arahant*, who has accomplished his task and is

influx-free, a concept like ‘house’, ‘mansion’, or ‘palace’ has no influence by way of craving, conceit and views. He might say ‘I speak’ or ‘I preach’, he might even say ‘they speak to me’, but since he has understood the nature of worldly parlance, he uses such expressions as mere turns of speech. Therefore the Buddhas and *arahants*, though they may enter a house, do not entertain the concept of ‘a house’ in it.

Some might think that in order to destroy the concept of ‘a house’, one has to break up the tiles and bricks into atoms. But that is not the way to deliverance. One has to understand according to the law of dependent arising that not only is a house dependent on tiles and bricks, but the tiles and bricks are themselves dependent on a house. Very often philosophers forget about the principle of relativity involved here.

Tiles and bricks are dependent on a house. This is a point worth considering. One might think that a house is made up of tiles and bricks, but tiles and bricks themselves come to be because of a house. There is a mutual relationship between them.

If one raises the question: ‘What is a tile?’, the answer will be: ‘It is an item used for building the roof of a house’. Likewise a brick is an item used in building a wall. This shows the relativity between a house and a tile as well as between a house and a brick. So there is no need to get down to an atomistic analysis like nuclear physicists. Wisdom is something that enables one to see this relativity penetratively, then and there.

Today we happened to discuss some deep sections of the *Dhamma*, particularly on the subject of *maññanā*. A reappraisal of some of the deep *suttas* preached by the Buddha, now relegated into the background as those dealing with conventional truth, will be greatly helpful in dispelling the obsessions created by *maññanā*. What the *Mūla-pariāyasutta* offers in this respect is of utmost importance.

In fact, the Buddha never used a language totally different from the language of the worldlings. Now, for instance, chemists make use of a certain system of symbolic formulas in their laboratories, but back at home they revert to another set of symbols. However, both are symbols. There is no need to discriminate between them as higher or lower, so long as they serve the purpose at hand.

Therefore it is not proper to relegate some sermons as discursive or conventional in style. Always it is a case of using concepts in worldly parlance. In the laboratory one uses a particular set of symbols, but on returning home he uses another. In the same way, it is not possible to earmark a particular bundle of concepts as absolute and unchangeable.

As stated in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*, already discussed, all these concepts are worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly designations, which the *Tathāgata* makes use of without tenacious grasping.<sup>39</sup> However philosophical or technical the terminology may be, the *arahants* make use of it without grasping it tenaciously.

What is of importance is the function it fulfils. We should make use of the conceptual scaffolding only for the purpose of putting up the building. As the building comes up, the scaffolding has to leave. It has to be dismantled. If one simply clings onto the scaffolding, the building would never come up.

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> M I 1, *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> Ps I 41.  
<sup>4</sup> A III 6, *Kāmasutta*; see also Dh 379, *Bhikkhuvagga*.  
<sup>5</sup> Ps I 28.  
<sup>6</sup> E.g. D I 70, *Sāmaññaphalasutta*.  
<sup>7</sup> See sermon 11.  
<sup>8</sup> See sermon 1.  
<sup>9</sup> M I 487, *Aggivacchagottasutta*.  
<sup>10</sup> See sermon 12.  
<sup>11</sup> Ps I 38.  
<sup>12</sup> M I 266, *MahāTaṇhāsaṅkhasutta*.  
<sup>13</sup> M II 265, *Āneñjasappāyasutta*.  
<sup>14</sup> See sermon 2.  
<sup>15</sup> S I 54, *Kakudhasutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> Vibh-a 53.  
<sup>17</sup> See sermon 12.  
<sup>18</sup> See sermons 9 and 12.  
<sup>19</sup> A III 413, *Nibbedhikasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> Sn 874, *Kalahavivādasutta*; see sermon 11.  
<sup>21</sup> E.g. at Sn 219, *Munisutta*; and Th 748, *TelakāṇiTheragāthā*.  
<sup>22</sup> Sn 68, *Khaggavisāṇasutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> E.g. at M I 12, *Sabbāsavasutta*.  
<sup>24</sup> M I 6, *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> Ps I 56.  
<sup>26</sup> S IV 201, *Yavakalāpisutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> Dh 33, *Cittavagga*.  
<sup>28</sup> See sermons 11 and 12.  
<sup>29</sup> See sermon 10.  
<sup>30</sup> Sn 757-758, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*.  
<sup>31</sup> E.g. at D III 273, *Dasuttarasutta*.  
<sup>32</sup> M I 197, *MahāSāropamasutta*.  
<sup>33</sup> See sermon 2.  
<sup>34</sup> M II 265, *Āneñjasappāyasutta*.  
<sup>35</sup> M I 145, *Rathavinītasutta*; M I 130, *Alagaddūpamasutta*.  
<sup>36</sup> See sermon 8; M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.  
<sup>37</sup> M I 251, *CūḷaTaṇhāsaṅkhasutta*.  
<sup>38</sup> S I 14, *Arahantasutta*.  
<sup>39</sup> D I 202, *Paṭṭhapādasutta*.

## **Sermon - 14**



*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho  
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*<sup>1</sup>

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction."

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the fourteenth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

In our last sermon we gave a description of the forms of imaginings or methinkings, which the Buddha had compared to an extremely subtle bondage of *Māra*. The *Yavakalāpisutta* of the *Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* has shown us that all kinds of thoughts concerning existence that stem from this subtle conceit 'am', *asmimāna*, are mere imaginings or methinkings, and that they are called a bondage of *Māra*, because they have the power to keep beings shackled to existence.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen how they follow a dichotomy, even like the dilemma posed by the fivefold bondage of *Vepacitti*, the king of demons. Whether one thinks 'I shall be' or 'I shall not be', one is in bondage to *Māra*. Whether one thinks 'I shall be percipient' or 'I shall be non-percipient', or 'I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient', one is still in bondage to *Māra*.

There is a dichotomy involved here. The fact that these imaginings, which follow a dichotomy, must be transcended completely, as well as the way to transcend them, has been preached by the Buddha to Venerable *Pukkusāti* in the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

There is a pithy passage, forming the grand finale of this discourse, in which the Buddha gives a resume. We propose to quote this passage at the very outset as it scintillates with a majestic fervour of the *Dhamma*.

*Yatthaṭṭhitam maññussavā nappavattanti, maññussave kho pana nappavattamāne muni santo ti vuccatīti, iti kho pan'etaṃ vuttam. Kiñ c'etaṃ paṭicca vuttam?*

*Asmīti bhikkhu maññitam etaṃ, ayam aham asmīti maññitam etaṃ, bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ, na bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ, rūpī bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ, arūpī bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ, saññī bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ, asaññī bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ, nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissan'ti maññitam etaṃ.*

*Maññitam, bhikkhu, rogo, maññitam gaṇḍo, maññitam sallam. Sabbamaññitānaṃ tveva, bhikkhu, samatikkamā muni santo ti vuccati.*

*Muni kho pana, bhikkhu, santo na jāyati na jiyyati na miyyati na kuppati na piheti. Tam pi'ssa bhikkhu natthi yena jāyetha, ajāya-māno kiṃ jiyyissati, ajijyamāno kiṃ miyyissati, amiyyamāno kiṃ kuppissati, akuppamāno kissa pihessati?*

*Yatthaṭṭhitam maññussavā nappavattanti, maññussave kho pana nappavattamāne muni santo ti vuccatīti, iti yaṃ taṃ vuttam, idam etaṃ paṭicca vuttam.*<sup>3</sup>

In the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* we find the Buddha presenting some points as the theme and gradually developing it, analysing, clarifying, and expatiating, as the discourse proceeds. The opening sentence in the above paragraph is a quotation of a part of that original statement of the Buddha, which forms the theme. Here is the rendering:

"‘Steadied whereon the tides of imaginings no longer occur in him, and when the tides of imaginings occur no more in him, he is called a sage stilled’, so it was said. And with reference to what was this said?

‘Am’, monk, is something imagined; ‘I am this’ is something imagined; ‘I shall be’ is something imagined; ‘I shall not be’ is something imagined; ‘I shall be possessed of form’ is something imagined; ‘I shall be formless’ is something imagined; ‘I shall be percipient’ is something imagined; ‘I shall be non-percipient’ is something imagined; ‘I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient’ is something imagined.

The imagined is a disease, the imagined is an abscess, the imagined is a dart. It is with the surmounting of all what is imagined, monk, that a sage is called ‘stilled’.

The sage who is stilled is not born, nor does he age, nor does he die, nor is he shaken, and he has no longing. Even that is not in him whereby he might be born. Not being born, how shall he age? Not aging, how shall he die? Not dying, how shall he be shaken? Being unshaken, what shall he long for?

So it was with reference to this, that it was said ‘steadied whereon the tides of imaginings no longer occur in him, and when the tides of imagining occur no more in him, he is called a sage stilled’.”

All this goes to show how relevant the question of imaginings is to the path leading to *Nibbāna*. This pithy passage, which brings the discourse to a climax, portrays how the sage is at peace when his mind is released by stemming the tides of imaginings. He attains release from birth, decay and death, here and now, because he has realized the cessation of existence in this very world.

It is in this light that we have to interpret the above statement “even that is not in him whereby he might be born”. Dependent on existence is birth. Due to whatever postulate of existence one can speak of a ‘birth’, even that existence is not in him. Not being born, how can he age? How can he grow old or decay? This is because of the implicit interrelation between conditions.

Here we can flash back to our analogy of a tree, mentioned earlier.<sup>4</sup> In order to explain the mutual interrelation between the concepts of birth, decay and death, we brought up a simile, which however is not canonical. That is to say, supposing there is some kind of a tree, the buds, the leaves, the flowers, the fruits and the wood of which could be sold for making one’s livelihood.

If five men trading in those items respectively are made to line up at some particular stage in the growth of this tree and asked whether the tree is too young or too old, the answers given might differ according to the individual standpoint grasped in each case.

It turns out to be a difference of viewpoint. For instance, the man who makes his living by selling the buds would reply that the tree is too old when the buds turn into leaves. Similarly, when it is the season for the leaves to fall and the flowers to bloom, one who trades in leaves might say that the tree is too old. And when flowers turn into fruits, the florist’s viewpoint would be similar. In this way one can

understand how this concept changes according to what one grasps - that there is an implicit relativity about it.

Now, as for this sage, he has given up everything that he had grasped. Grasping has been given up completely. Imagining, too, has been abandoned. Hence, not being 'born', how shall he age? The sage has no postulate of existence. Since there is no existence, there is no 'birth'. Because there is no birth, there is no decay.

It is a well known fact that the term *jarā* implies both growth and decay. It is after setting a limit that we speak of a process of 'decay', after 'growth'. This limit, however, varies according to our individual standpoint grasped - according to our point of view. That is what we have tried to illustrate by this analogy.

Then we have the statement "not aging, how shall he die?" Since decay is an approach to death, where there is no decay, there is no death. The fact that there is no death we have already seen in our exposition of the significance of the verses quoted above from the *Adhimutta Theragāthā*.<sup>5</sup> When the bandits got round to kill the Venerable *Adhimutta*, he declared:

*Na me hoti aho sin'ti,  
bhavissan'ti na hoti me,  
saṅkhārā vibhavissanti,  
tatha kā paridevanā?*<sup>6</sup>

"It does not occur to me 'I was',  
Nor does it occur to me 'I shall be',  
Mere preparations will get destroyed,  
What is there to lament?"

This declaration exemplifies the above statement. When all graspings are given up, there is no 'decay' or 'death'.

*Amiyyamāno kiṃ kuppissati*, "not dying, how shall he be shaken?" The verb *kuppati* does not necessarily mean "getting annoyed". Here it means to be "shaken up" or "moved". When one holds on to a standpoint, one gets shaken up if someone else tries to dislodge him from that standpoint.

The deliverance in *Nibbāna* is called *akuppā cetovimutti*, the unshakeable deliverance of the mind.<sup>7</sup> All other deliverances of the mind, known to the world, are shakeable, *kuppa*. They are unsteady. They shake before the pain of death. Only *Nibbāna* is called *akuppā cetovimutti*, the unshakeable deliverance of the mind.

So this peaceful sage, the *arahant*, established in that concentration of the fruit of *arahant*-hood, *arahatta phalasamādhī*, which is known as the influx-free deliverance of the mind, *anāsavā cetovimutti*, and is endowed with the wisdom proper to *arahant*-hood, *paññāvimutti*, "deliverance through wisdom", is unshaken before death. His mind remains unshaken. That is why the *arahant* *Thera* Venerable *Adhimutta* fearlessly made the above declaration to the bandits.

Now as to the significance of the Buddha's statement *amiyyamāno kiṃ kuppissati, akuppamāno kissa pihessati*, "not dying, how shall he be shaken, and being unshaken, what shall he long for?" When there is no shock, no agitation or trembling, what does one long for? *Pihā* means longing, desiring for something or other. In this context it refers to that longing which arises at the moment of death in one who has not destroyed craving.

It is as a consequence of that longing that he enters some form of existence, according to his *kamma*. That longing is not there in this sage, for the simple reason that he is unshaken before death. He has nothing to look forward to. No desires or longings. *Akuppamāno kissa pihessati*, "being unshaken, what shall he long for?"

It is obvious, therefore, that the concepts of birth, decay and death become meaningless to this sage. That is precisely why he is at peace, having transcended all imaginings.

All this goes to show, that *Nibbāna* is a state beyond decay and death. We can clearly understand from this discourse why *Nibbāna* is known as a decayless, deathless state, realizable in this very world. That sage has conquered decay and death here and now, because he has realized the cessation of existence, here and now.

This is something extremely wonderful about the *arahant*. He realizes the cessation of existence in his attainment to the fruit of *arahant*-hood. How does he come to realize the cessation of existence? Craving is extinct in him, hence there is no grasping. Where there is no grasping, there is no existence. Because there is no existence,

birth, decay and death, along with sorrow and lamentation, cease altogether.

From the foregoing we could well infer that all those concepts like birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, come about as a result of a heap of pervert perceptions, pervert thoughts and pervert views, based on the conceit of an existence, the conceit 'am'.

These three kinds of perversions known as *saññāvipallāsa*, *cittavipallāsa* and *diṭṭhivipallāsa* give rise to a mass of concepts of an imaginary nature.<sup>8</sup> The entire mass of suffering, summed up by the terms birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, are basically of a mental origin.

For an illustration of this fact, we can go back to our analogy of winding some strands into a rope, mentioned earlier.<sup>9</sup> We pointed out that in the case of some strands that are being mistakenly wound in the same direction, it is the grasp in the middle that gives at least a semblance of a rope to it. So long as there is no such grasping, the strands do not become knotty or tense, as they go round and round. It is only when someone grasps it in the middle that the strands begin to get winded up, knotty and tense. What is called existence, or becoming, *bhava*, follows the same norm.

True to the law of impermanence, everything in the world changes. But there is something innocent in this change. Impermanence is innocuous in itself. We say it is innocuous because it means no harm to anyone. It is simply the nature of this world, the suchness, the norm. It can do us harm only when we grasp, just as in the case of that quasi rope.

The tenseness between winding and unwinding, arising out of that grasp in the middle, is comparable to what is called *bhavasāṅkhāra*, "preparations for existence". *Sāṅkhārā*, or preparations, are said to be dependent on *avijjā*, or ignorance.

Now we can form an idea of the relationship between these two even from this analogy of the rope. The grasp in the middle creates two ends, giving rise to a dilemma. In the case of existence, too, grasping leads to an antinomial conflict. To become a thing, is to disintegrate into another thing.

On a previous occasion we happened to discuss the significance of the term *maññanā*, me-thinking or imagining, with reference to the verse *yena yena hi maññati, tato taṃ hoti aññathā*.<sup>10</sup> *Maññanā* itself gives rise to a ‘thing’, which from its very inception goes on disintegrating into another thing.

Just as much as grasping leads to the concept of two ends, to become a thing is to start changing into another thing, that is, it comes under the sway of the law of impermanence. Illustrations of this norm are sometimes to be met with in the discourses, but their significance is often ignored.

The idea of the two ends and the middle sometimes finds expression in references to an ‘above’, ‘below’ and ‘across in the middle’, *uddhaṃ, adho, tiriyaṃ majjhe*; or in the terms ‘before’, ‘behind’ and ‘middle’, *pure, pacchā, majjhe*. Such references deal with some deep aspects of the *Dhamma*, relating to *Nibbāna*.

As a good illustration, we may take up the following two verses from the *Mettaḡūmaṇavapucchā* in the *Pārāyanavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*.

*Yaṃ kiñci sampajānāsi,  
uddhaṃ adho tiriyaṃ cāpi majjhe,  
etesu nandiṇca nivesanaṇca  
panujja viññāṇaṃ bhava na tiṭṭhe.  
Evaṃ vihārī sato appamatto,  
bhikkhu caraṃ hitvā mamāyitāni,  
jātijaraṃ sokapariddavaṇca  
idh’eva vidvā paḷaheyya dukkhaṃ.*<sup>11</sup>

"Whatever you may know to be  
Above, below and across in the middle,  
Dispel the delight and the tendency to dwell in them,  
Then your consciousness will not remain in existence.  
A monk, endowed with understanding,  
Thus dwelling mindful and heedful,  
As he fares along giving up all possessions,

Would abandon even here and now  
Birth, decay, sorrow, lamentation and suffering."

The word *idh'eva* occurring in the second verse is highly significant, in that it means the abandonment of all those things here and now, not leaving it for an existence to come.

In the *MahāViyūhasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* also a similar emphasis is laid on this idea of 'here and now'. About the *arahant* it is said that he has no death or birth here and now - *cutūpapāto idha yassa natthi*, "to whom, even here, there is no death or birth".<sup>12</sup> In this very world he has transcended them by making those two concepts meaningless.

The word *nīvesanaṃ*, occurring in the first verse, is also significant. It means "dwelling". In consciousness there is a tendency to 'dwell in'. That is why in some contexts it is said that form is the abode or dwelling place of consciousness, *rūpadhātu kho, gahapati, viññāṇassa oko*, "the form element, householder, is the abode of consciousness".<sup>13</sup> The terms *oka*, *niketa* and *nīvesana* are synonymous, meaning "abode", "home", or "dwelling place".

The nature of consciousness in general is to abide or dwell in. That non-manifestative consciousness, *anidassana viññāṇa*, however, has got rid of the tendency to abide or dwell in.

Now we can revert to the passage in the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*, which speaks of an occurrence of tides of imaginings. The passage actually begins with the words *yatthaṭṭhitam maññussavā nappavattanti*, "steadied whereon the tides of imaginings occur no more in him". The idea behind this occurrence of tides of imaginings is quite often represented by the concept of *āsava*, influx. Sensuality, *kāma*, existence, *bhava*, views, *diṭṭhi* and ignorance, *avijjā*, are referred to as "influxes", *āsavā*, or "floods", *oghā*. These are the four kinds of *samsāric* habits that continuously flow into the minds of beings.

The above mentioned *sutta* passage refers to a place steadied whereon the tides of imaginings do not occur or flow in, a place that is free from their 'influence'. This is none other than *Nibbāna*, for which one of the epithets used is *dīpa*, or island.<sup>14</sup>



Since *Nibbāna* is called an island, some might take it literally to mean some sort of a place in this world. In fact, this is the general concept of *Nibbāna* some are prone to uphold in their interpretation of *Nibbāna*.

But why it is called an island is clearly explained for us by a discourse in the *Pārāyanavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, namely the *Kappamānavapucchā*. In this *sutta*, the Brahmin youth *Kappa* poses the following question to the Buddha:

*Majjhe sarasmiṃ tiṭṭhataṃ  
oghe jāte mahabbhaye  
jarāmaccuparetānaṃ  
dīpaṃ pabrūhi, mārisa.  
Tvaṅca me dīpaṃ akkhāhi  
yathayidaṃ nāparaṃ siyā.*<sup>15</sup>

"To them that stand midstream,  
When the frightful floods flow forth,  
To them in decay and death forlorn,  
An island, sire, may you proclaim.  
An island which none else excels,  
Yea, such an isle, pray tell me sire."

And this is the Buddha's reply to it:

*Akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ  
etaṃ dīpaṃ anāparaṃ  
'nibbānaṃ' iti naṃ brūmi  
jarāmaccuparikkhayaṃ.*<sup>16</sup>

"Owning naught, grasping naught,  
The isle is this, none else besides,  
*Nibbāna* - that is how I call that isle,  
Wherein Decay is decayed and Death is dead."

The Buddha's reply makes it clear that the term *Nibbāna* stands for the extinction of craving and grasping. The ideal of owning naught and grasping naught is itself *Nibbāna*, and nothing else. If the term had any other connotation, the Buddha would have mentioned it in this context.

It is indubitably clear, then, that the epithet *dīpaṃ*, or island, has to be understood in a deeper sense when it refers to *Nibbāna*. It is that owning nothing and grasping nothing, that puts an end to decay and death.

Though we have yet to finish the discussion of the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*, the stage is already set now to understand the significance of a certain brief discourse in the *Udāna*, which is very often quoted in discussions on *Nibbāna*. For facility of understanding, we shall take it up now, as it somehow fits into the context.

*Atthi, bhikkhave, ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhatam. No ce taṃ, bhikkhave, abhaviṣṣa ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhatam, na yidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṅkhatassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyetha. Yasmā ca kho, bhikkhave, atthi ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhatam, tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṅkhatassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyati.*<sup>17</sup>

"Monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. Monks, if that not-born, not-become, not-made, not-compounded were not, there would be no stepping out here from what is born, become, made and compounded. But since, monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded, therefore there is a stepping out from what is born, become, made and compounded."

The terms *ajātaṃ*, not-born, *abhūtaṃ*, not-become, *akataṃ*, not-made, and *asaṅkhatam*, not-compounded, are all epithets for *Nibbāna*. The Buddha declares that if not for this not-born, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, there would be no possibility of stepping out or release here, that is, in this very world, from the born, the become, the made and the compounded.

The second half of the passage rhetorically reiterates and emphasises the same fact. Now as to the significance of this profound declaration of the Buddha, we may point out that the terms not-born, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, suggest the emancipation of the *arahant's* mind from birth, becoming and preparations, *saṅkhārā*. They refer to the cessation of birth, becoming and preparations realized by the *arahant*. So then the significance of these terms is purely psychological.

But the commentator, the Venerable *Dhammapāla*, pays little attention to the word *idha*, "here", in this passage, which needs to be

emphasized. The fact that there is a possibility here and now, of stepping out from the state of being born, become, made and compounded, surely deserves emphasis, since, until then, release from decay and death was thought to be possible only in another dimension of existence, that is, after death.

The prospect of stepping out from decay and death here and now in this very world has to be asserted for its novelty, which is why the declaration opens with the word *atthi*, "there is". However, most of the scholars who tried to interpret this passage in their discussion on *Nibbāna*, instead of laying stress on the word *idha*, "here", emphasize the opening word *atthi*, "there is", to prove that *Nibbāna* is some form of reality absolutely existing somewhere.

As that passage from the *Dhatuvibhaṅgasutta* on *maññanā*, which we discussed, has shown us, the terms *ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ* and *asaṅkhataṃ* have to be understood in a deeper sense.

Existence is a conceit deep rooted in the mind, which gives rise to a heap of pervert notions. Its cessation, therefore, has also to be accomplished in the mind and by the mind. This is the gist of the Buddha's exhortation.

Let us now come back to the *Dhatuvibhaṅgasutta* to discuss another facet of it. We started our discussion with the grand finale of that discourse, because of its relevance to the question of *maññanā*. However, as a matter of fact, this discourse preached by the Buddha to the Venerable *Pukkusāti* is an exposition of a systematic path of practice for the emancipation of the mind from imaginings or *maññanā*.

The discourse begins with the declaration *chadhāturo ayaṃ, bhikkhu, puriso*, "monk, man as such is a combination of six elements".<sup>18</sup> The worldling thinks that a being, *satta* (Sanskrit *sattva*), exists at a higher level of reality than inanimate objects.

Now what did the Buddha do to explode this concept of a being in his discourse to Venerable *Pukkusāti*? He literally thrashed out that concept, by breaking up this 'man' into his basic elements and defining him as a bundle of six elements, namely earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness.

As the discourse proceeds, he explains in an extremely lucid manner how one can detach one's mind from each of these elements. We happened to mention at the very outset that the depth of the *Dhamma* has to be seen through lucidity and not through complicated over-drawings. In fact, this discourse exhibits such lucidity.

The meditation subject of elements, which grew in complexity at the hands of later Buddhist philosophers, who took to atomistic analysis of a speculative sort, is presented here in this *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* with a refreshing clarity and lucidity. Here it is explained in such a way that one can directly experience it.

For instance in describing the earth element, the Buddha gives as examples of the internal earth element such parts of the body as head hairs, body hairs, nails and teeth. Because the external earth element hardly needs illustration, nothing in particular has been mentioned as to that aspect. Anyone can easily understand what is meant by it. There is no attempt at atomistic analysis.

However, the Buddha draws special attention to a certain first principle of great significance. *Yā c'eva kho pana ajjhattikā paṭhavīdhātu, yā ca bāhirā paṭhavīdhātu, paṭhavīdhātur ev'esā. Taṃ n'etaṃ mama, n'eso ham asmi, na me so attā ti evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya disvā paṭhavīdhātuyā nibbindati, paṭhavīdhātuyā cittaṃ virājeti.*<sup>19</sup>

"That which is the internal earth element, and that which is the external earth element, they are both just the earth element itself. And that should be seen as it is with right wisdom, thus: 'this is not mine', 'I am not this', 'this is not my self'. Having seen thus with right wisdom as it is, he becomes dejected with the earth element, he detaches his mind from the earth element."

It is this first principle that is truly important and not any kind of atomic theory. This resolution of the internal/external conflict has in it the secret of stopping the *saṃsāric* vortex of reiterated becoming, *saṃsāravatṭa*. It is due to the very discrimination between an 'internal' and an 'external' that this *saṃsāric* vortex is kept going.

Now in the case of a vortex, what is found inside and outside is simply water. But all the same there is such a vehement speed and activity and a volley of changes going on there. So it is the case with

this ‘man’. What is found in his body is the earth element. What is to be found outside is also the earth element. And yet, the ordinary person sees quite a wide disparity between the two. Why is that? That is because of the illusory nature of consciousness.

We have devoted a number of sermons to explain the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. We happened to speak of name-and-form as a reflection or a self-image.<sup>20</sup> Even as one who comes before a mirror, on seeing his reflection on it, would say: ‘this is mine’, ‘this am I’, ‘this is my self’, the worldling is in the habit of entertaining cravings, conceits and views.

In fact the purpose of cravings, conceits and views is to reinforce the distinction between an internal and an external. Already when one says ‘this is mine’, one discriminates between the ‘this’ and ‘I’, taking them to be separate realities. ‘This am I’ and ‘this is my self’ betray the same tacit assumption.

Just as by looking at a mirror one may like or dislike the image appearing on it, these three points of view give rise to various pervert notions. All this because of the perpetuation of the distinction between an internal and an external, which is the situation with the ordinary worldling.

Since cravings, conceits and views thus reinforce the dichotomy between an internal and an external, the Buddha has upheld this principle underlying the meditation on the four elements, to resolve this conflict.

The fact that with the resolution of this conflict between the internal and the external concerning the four elements the mind becomes emancipated is put across to us in the following verse in the *Tālapuṭa Theragāthā*.

*Kadā nu kaṭṭhe ca tiṇe latā ca  
khandhe ime ‘haṃ amīte ca dhamme  
ajjhattikān’ eva ca bāhirāṇi ca  
samaṃ tuleyyaṃ, tad idaṃ kadā me?*<sup>21</sup>

This verse gives expression to Venerable *Tālapuṭa Thera*’s aspiration to become an *arahant*. It says:

"When shall I weigh as equal all these  
Limitless things both internal and external,  
Twigs, grass, creepers and these aggregates,  
O! when shall that be for me?"

It is at the stage of *arahant*-hood that the internal and the external appear alike. That is precisely why the Venerable *Adhimutta Thera*, whom we quoted earlier, uttered the lines:

*Tiṇakatthasamaṃ lokam,  
yadā paññāya passati.*<sup>22</sup>

"When one sees through wisdom,

The world to be comparable to grass and twigs."

The comparison is between the internal world of the five aggregates, or this conscious body, and the inanimate objects outside.

Just as in the case of the four elements earth, water, fire and air, the Buddha pointed out a way of liberating one's mind from the space element with the help of similar illustrations. In explaining the space element, too, he gave easily intelligible examples.

The internal space element is explained in terms of some apertures in the body that are well known, namely those in the ears, nose and the mouth.<sup>23</sup> Apart from such instances, he did not speak of any microscopic space element, as in scientific explanations, probably because it is irrelevant. Such an analysis is irrelevant for this kind of reflection.

Here we have to bear in mind the fact that perception as such is a mirage.<sup>24</sup> However far one may go on analysing, form and space are relative to each other like a picture and its background. A picture is viewed against its background, which is relative to it. So also are these two concepts of form and space. Consciousness provides the framework for the entire picture.

By way of clarification we may allude to the pre-Buddhistic attempts of Yogins to solve this problem, solely through the method of serenity, *samatha*, ignoring the method of insight, *vipassanā*. The procedure they followed was somewhat on these lines:

They would first of all surmount the concept of form or matter through the first four mental absorptions, or *jhānas*. Then as they inclined towards the formless, what confronted them first was space. A very appropriate illustration in this context would be the method of

removing the sign of the *kaṣiṇa* and attending to the space left by that removal as ‘infinite’ or ‘boundless’, in order to arouse the base of infinity of space.<sup>25</sup>

This mode of contemplation of space betrays the fact that space is also something made up, or prepared, *saṅkhata*. Whatever is prepared, *saṅkhata*, is thought out and mind made, *abhisankhataṃ abhi-saṅcetayitaṃ*.

The Buddha proclaimed that there is only one *asaṅkhata*, unprepared, that is *Nibbāna*.<sup>26</sup> But later philosophers confounded the issue by taking space also to be *asaṅkhata*.<sup>27</sup> They seem to have ignored its relation to the mind in regarding causes and conditions as purely external things.

Here we see the relativity between form and space. Like the picture and its background, form and space stand relative to each other. All this is presented to us by attention, *manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā*,<sup>28</sup> "all things originate from attention".

Some of the later speculations about the nature of the space element are not in consonance with the basic principles outlined in the *Dhamma*. Such confusion arose probably due to a lack of understanding of the term *asaṅkhata*.

Now if we are to say something more about this particular discourse, what remains after detaching one's mind from these five elements, namely earth, water, fire, air and space, is a consciousness that is extremely pure.

The basic function of consciousness is discrimination. It distinguishes between the bitter and the sweet, for instance, to say: ‘this is bitter’, ‘this is sweet’. Or else it distinguishes between the pleasant, the unpleasant and the neutral with regard to feelings: ‘this is pleasant’, ‘this is unpleasant’, ‘this is neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant’.

Now that the five elements earth, water, fire, air and space, which create discrete objects as the outward manifestations of consciousness, have been totally removed, the residual function of consciousness amounts to a discrimination between the three grades of feelings.

The sage who has arrived at this stage of progress on the path to *Nibbāna* takes the next step by observing these three kinds of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, as

they arise and cease dependent on specific contacts, thereby gradually bringing the mind to equanimity.

He brings his mind to a stage of radiant equanimity. But even this equanimity he does not grasp by way of me-thinking or imagining. The phrase used in this connection is *visaṃyutto naṃ vedeti*, "being detached he experiences it".<sup>29</sup> There is a detachment, an aloofness, even in going through those sensations. This is clearly expressed in that context.

For instance, in the case of a pleasant feeling, it is said: *aniccā ti pajānāti, anajjhositā ti pajānāti, anabhinanditā ti pajānāti*, "he understands it to be impermanent, he understands it to be uninvolved, he understands it to be unrejoiced". With the understanding of impermanence, conceit goes down. The non-involvement does away with the views. The absence of rejoicing suggests the extinction of craving.

So the attainment of *arahant*-hood is in effect the cessation of that consciousness itself. That consciousness is divested of its most primary function of discriminating between the three grades of feeling, pleasant, unpleasant and neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant.

The term *visaṃyutto* connotes disjunction, suggestive of dispassion and detachment. In this way, the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* clearly brings out the relevance of the question of *maññanā* to the path leading to *Nibbāna*.

In some contexts, this practice of desisting from me-thinking or imagining is called *atammayatā*, non-identification. This is the term used by the Buddha throughout the *Sappurisasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. For instance we read there:

*Sappuriso ca kho, bhikkhave, iti paṭisañcikkhati: nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasamāpattiyā pi kho atammayatā vuttā Bhagavatā. Yena yena hi maññanti, tato taṃ hoti aññathā ti.*<sup>30</sup> "The good man reflects thus: the principle of non-identification has been recommended by the Buddha even with regard to the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception thus: in whatever way they imagine about it, thereby it turns otherwise."

The 'good man' referred to here is the noble disciple on the supramundane path.



This term *tammaya* needs to be clarified in order to understand the significance of this statement. It is derived from *tad maya*, literally "made of that" or "of that stuff". It is on a par with such terms as *sovaṇṇamaya*, golden, and *rajatamaya*, silvery.

When one has cravings, conceits and views about something, he practically becomes one with it due to that very grasping. In other words, he identifies himself with it. That is why the person who has imaginings about the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, which he has attained, thinks 'I am one who has attained the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception'.

He thereby has conceit, which is a defilement in itself. As a result, when he loses his mastery of that attainment, he becomes disconcerted. It is for that reason that the Buddha had enjoined that one should cultivate the attitude of *atammayatā*, or non-identification, even with regard to the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

The *arahant* is called *atammayo* in the sense that he does not identify himself with anything. An *arahant* cannot be identified with what he appears to possess. This is well expressed by the following verse in the *Devadūtavagga* of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*.

*Pasayha Māraṃ abhibhuyya antakaṃ  
yo ca phusī jātikkhayaṃ padhānavā  
sa tādiso lokavidū sumedho  
sabbesu dhammesu atammayo muni.*<sup>31</sup>

"That ardent sage who has touched the extinction of birth,  
Having overpowered *Māra* and conquered the Ender,  
That Such-like one, the wise sage, the knower of the world,  
Is aloof in regard to all phenomena."

The idea of this aloofness can be presented in another way, that is as detachment from the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized, *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta*, *viññāta*. One of the most important *suttas* that merits discussion in this respect is the *Bāhiyasutta* in the *Bodhivagga* of the *Udāna*. It is generally acclaimed as an extremely profound discourse.

The ascetic *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* came all the way from far off *Suppāraka* to see the Buddha. When he reached *Jetavana* monastery at *Sāvatthi*, he heard that the Buddha had just left on his alms-round.

Due to his extreme eagerness, he ran behind the Buddha and, on meeting him, fell prostrate before him and begged: "May the Exalted One preach to me the *Dhamma*."

The Buddha, however, seemed not so responsive, when he remarked: "Now it is untimely, *Bāhiya*, we are on our alms-round." Some might be puzzled by this attitude of the Buddha. But most probably it is one of those skilful means of the Buddha, suggestive of his great compassion and wisdom. It served to tone down the over-enthusiastic haste of *Bāhiya* and to arouse a reverential respect for the *Dhamma* in him.

*Bāhiya* repeated his request for the second time, adding: "I do not know whether there will be a danger to the Exalted One's life or to my own life." For the second time the Buddha refused.

It was when *Bāhiya* made his request for the third time that the Buddha acceded to it by giving a terse discourse, *saṅkhitta Dhamma-desanā*, of extraordinary depth. The exhortation, brief and deep as it is, was quite apt, since *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* belonged to that rare category of persons with quick understanding, *hippābhiññā*.<sup>32</sup>

*Tasmātiha te, Bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati. Evaṃ hi te, Bāhiya,, sikkhitabbaṃ.*

*Yato kho te, Bāhiya, diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena. Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha. Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya nev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena. Es'ev'anto dukkhassa.*<sup>33</sup>

No sooner had the Buddha finished his exhortation, the ascetic *Bāhiya* attained *arahant*-hood then and there. Let us now try to unravel the meaning of this abstruse discourse.

The discourse starts off abruptly, as if it had been wrested from the Buddha by *Bāhiya*'s repeated requests. *Tasmātiha, Bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ*, "well then, *Bāhiya*, you had better train yourself thus". And what is that training?

"In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cog-

nized there will be just the cognized. Thus, *Bāhiya*, should you train yourself."

It is as if the Buddha had addressed the ascetic *Bāhiya* in the terminology of the *Ariyans* and established him on the path to *Nibbāna*. Here the term *muta*, or "sensed", stands for whatever is experienced through the tongue, the nose, and the body.

The basic principle in this training seems to be the discipline to stop short at bare awareness, *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ, sute sutamattaṃ*, etc. The latter half of the discourse seems to indicate what happens when one goes through that training. The entire discourse is a presentation of the triple training of morality, concentration and wisdom in a nutshell.

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

As a literal translation this appears cryptic enough to demand an explanation. Let us first of all give a few clues to unravel the puzzle. The terms "by it", *tena*, and "in it", *tattha*, are rather elliptical. Though unexpressed, they seem to imply the relevance of *maññanā* to the whole problem. As we happened to mention earlier, imaginings or methinkings by way of craving, conceit and views, lead to an identification, for which the term used is *tammayatā*. Such an identification makes one unsteady, for when the thing identified with is shaken, one also gets shaken up.

This kind of imagining 'in terms of' is indicated by the elliptical *tena*, for we get a clear proof of it in the following two lines from the *Jarāsutta* in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*.

*Dhono na hi tena maññāti  
yad idaṃ diṭṭhasutaṃ mutesu vā.*<sup>34</sup>

*Dhona* is a term for the *arahant* as one who has "shaken off" all defilements. So these lines could be rendered as follows:

"The *arahant*, the one who has shaken off,  
Does not imagine 'in terms of'  
Whatever is seen, heard and sensed."

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> S IV 201, *Yavakalāpisutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> M III 246, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>4</sup> See sermon 4.  
<sup>5</sup> See sermon 8.  
<sup>6</sup> Th 715, *Adhimutta Theragāthā*.  
<sup>7</sup> E.g. at D III 273, *Dasuttarasutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> The *vipallāsas* occur at A II 52, *Vipallāsasutta*.  
<sup>9</sup> See sermon 8.  
<sup>10</sup> See sermon 2; Ud 32, *Lokasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> Sn 1055-1056, *Mettagūmānavapucchā*.  
<sup>12</sup> Sn 902, *MahāViyūhasutta*.  
<sup>13</sup> S III 9, *Hālidikānisutta*.  
<sup>14</sup> S IV 372, *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta*.  
<sup>15</sup> Sn 1092, *Kappamānavapucchā*.  
<sup>16</sup> Sn 1094, *Kappamānavapucchā*.  
<sup>17</sup> Ud 80, *Tatiyanibbānapaṭisaṃyuttasutta*.  
<sup>18</sup> M III 239, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> M III 240, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> See sermons 6 and 7.  
<sup>21</sup> Th 1101, *Tālapuṭa Theragāthā*.  
<sup>22</sup> Th 717, *Adhimutta Theragāthā*, see sermon 8.  
<sup>23</sup> M III 244, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>24</sup> S III 141, *Phenapiṇḍūpamasutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> Vism 327.  
<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta*, S IV 359-373.  
<sup>27</sup> Mil 268.  
<sup>28</sup> A IV 338, *Kiṃmūlakasutta*.  
<sup>29</sup> M III 244, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>30</sup> M III 44, *Sappurisasutta*.  
<sup>31</sup> A I 150, *Ādhipateyyasutta*.  
<sup>32</sup> A I 24, *Etadaggavagga*.  
<sup>33</sup> Ud 8, *Bāhiyasutta*.  
<sup>34</sup> Sn 813, *Jarāsutta*.

## **Sermon - 15**

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa  
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho  
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*<sup>1</sup>

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction."

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the fifteenth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

Towards the end of our last sermon we happened to quote a brief exhortation on *Dhamma* from the *Udāna*, which enabled the ascetic *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* to liberate his mind from imaginings and attain the state of non-identification, *atammayatā*, or *arahant*-hood. In order to attempt an exposition of that exhortation of the Buddha, which was pithy enough to bring about instantaneous *arahant*-hood, let us refresh our memory of that brief discourse to *Bāhiya*.

*Tasmātiha te, Bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati. Evaṃ hi te, Bāhiya, sikkhitabbaṃ.*

*Yato kho te, Bāhiya, diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena. Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha. Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya nev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena. Es'ev'anto dukkhassa.*<sup>2</sup>

"Well, then, *Bāhiya*, you had better train yourself thus: In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized. Thus, *Bāhiya*, should you train yourself.

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

As a clue to an exegesis of this discourse, we made an attempt, the other day, to unravel the meaning of the two puzzling terms in the text, namely, *na tena* and *na tattha*. These two terms are apparently unrelated to the context. To get at their significance, we brought up a quotation of two lines from the *Jarāsutta* of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*.

*Dhono na hi tena maññati  
yadidaṃ diṭṭhasutaṃ mutesu vā.*<sup>3</sup>

*Dhona* is a term for the *arahant* in the sense that he has "shaken off" the dust of defilements. So then, these two lines imply that the *arahant* does not imagine thereby, namely *yadidaṃ*, in terms of whatever is seen, heard or sensed. These two lines are, as it were, a random exegesis of our riddle terms in the *Bāhiyasutta*.

The first line itself gives the clue to the rather elliptical term *na tena*, which carries no verb with it. Our quotation makes it clear that the implication is *maññanā*, or imagining. *Dhono na hi tena maññati*, the *arahant* does not imagine 'by it' or 'thereby'.

Although the *Bāhiyasutta* makes no mention of the word *maññanā*, this particular expression seems to suggest that what is implied here is a form of imagining. By way of further proof we may allude to another quotation, which we had to bring up several times: *Yena yena hi maññanti, tato taṃ hoti aññathā*.<sup>4</sup> "In whatever terms they imagine it, thereby it turns otherwise". We came across another expression, which has a similar connotation: *tena ca mā maññi*, "do not be vain thereby".<sup>5</sup>

The first thing we can infer, therefore, from the above quoted two lines of the verse, is that what is to be understood by the elliptical expression *na tena* in the *Bāhiyasutta* is the idea of imagining, or in short, *na tena maññati*, "does not imagine thereby".

Secondly, as to what precisely is implied by the word *tena*, or "by it", can also be easily inferred from those two lines. In fact, the sec-

ond line beginning with the word *yadidaṃ*, which means "namely" or "that is", looks like a commentary on the first line itself. The *dhono*, or the *arahant*, does not imagine 'thereby', namely by whatever is seen, heard and sensed.

The verse in question mentions only the three terms *diṭṭha*, *suta* and *muta*, whereas the *Bāhiyasutta* has as its framework the four terms *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta* and *viññāta*. Since what precedes the term *na tena* in the *Bāhiyasutta* is the fourfold premise beginning with *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati*, "when to you, *Bāhiya*, there will be in the seen just the seen", it stands to reason that what the Buddha meant by the term *na tena* is the attitude of not thinking 'in terms of' whatever is seen, heard, sensed or cognized. That is to say, not imagining 'thereby'.

This same attitude of not imagining 'thereby' is what is upheld in the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*, which we discussed at length on a previous occasion.<sup>6</sup> There we explained the word *maññanā*, "me-thinking", "imagining", taking as a paradigm the first term *paṭhavi*, occurring in the list of twenty-four terms given there. Among the twenty-four terms, we find mentioned the four relevant to our present problem, namely *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta* and *viññāta*.<sup>7</sup>

We are now used to the general schema of the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*, concerning the attitude of the three categories of persons mentioned there. Let us, for instance, take up what is said in that context with regard to the *sekha*, or the monk in higher training.

*Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhiññāya paṭhaviṃ mā maññi, paṭhaviyā mā maññi, paṭhavito mā maññi, paṭhaviṃ me ti mā maññi, paṭhaviṃ mā abhinandi.*

This is how the attitude of the *sekha* is described with regard to *paṭhavi*, or earth. Suppose we substitute *diṭṭha*, or the seen, in place of *paṭhavi*. This is what we should get:

*Diṭṭhaṃ diṭṭhato abhiññāya diṭṭhaṃ mā maññi, diṭṭhasmiṃ mā maññi, diṭṭhato mā maññi, diṭṭhaṃ me ti mā maññi, diṭṭhaṃ mā abhinandi.*

What the *sekha* has before him is a step of training, and this is how he has to train in respect of the four things, the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized. He should not imagine in terms of them.



For instance, he understands through higher knowledge, and not through the ordinary perception of the worldling, the seen as ‘seen’. Having thus understood it, he has to train in not imagining the seen as a thing, by objectifying it. *Diṭṭhaṃ mā maññi*, let him not imagine a ‘seen’. Also, let him not imagine ‘in the seen’, or ‘from the seen’. We have already pointed out the relationship between these imaginings and the grammatical structure.<sup>8</sup>

This objectification of the seen gives rise to acquisitive tendencies, to imagine the seen as ‘mine’. *Diṭṭhaṃ me ti mā maññi*, let him not imagine ‘I have seen’ or ‘I have a seen’.

This acquisition has something congratulatory about it. It leads to some sort of joy, so the monk in higher training has to combat that too. *Diṭṭhaṃ mā abhinandi*, let him not delight in the seen.

It seems, then, that the Buddha has addressed the ascetic *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* in the language of the *ariyans*, for the very first instruction given to him was "in the seen there will be just the seen". So highly developed in wisdom and quick witted was *Bāhiya*<sup>9</sup> that the Buddha promptly asked him to stop short at the seen, by understanding that in the seen there is just the seen.

Not to have imaginings or me-thinkings about the seen is therefore the way to stop short at just the seen. If one does not stop short at just the seen, but goes on imagining in terms of ‘in the seen’, ‘from the seen’, etc., as already stated, one will end up with an identification, or *tammayatā*.

In our last sermon we brought up the term *tammayatā*. When one starts imagining in such terms about something, one tends to become one with it, *tammayo*, even as things made out of gold and silver are called golden, *suvaṇṇamaya*, and silvery, *rajatamaya*. It is as if one who grasps a gem becomes its owner and if anything happens to the gem he is affected by it. To possess a gem is to be possessed by it.

When one gets attached and becomes involved and entangled in the seen through craving, conceit and views, by imagining egoistically, the result is identification, *tammayatā*, literally "of-that-ness".

In this present context, however, the Buddha puts *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* on the path to non-identification, or *atammayatā*. That is to say, he advises *Bāhiya* not to indulge in such imaginings. That attitude leads to non-identification and detachment. When one has no attach-

ments, involvements and entanglements regarding the seen, one does not have the notion of being in the seen.

Once we spoke about a children's hut into which the mother was invited.<sup>10</sup> When she crept into that plaything of a hut, she did not seriously entertain the thought of being 'in' it. Similarly if one does not indulge in imaginings, one has no notion of being 'in' the seen.

This, then, is the significance of the words *na tattha*, "not in it". *Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha*. "When, *Bāhiya*, you are not by it, then, *Bāhiya*, you are not in it." That is to say, when for instance *Bāhiya* does not imagine 'by the seen', he is not 'in the seen'. Likewise, he is not in the heard, sensed or cognized. From this we can deduce the meaning of what follows.

*Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya nev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena*. At whatever moment you neither imagine 'by the seen' nor entertain the notion of being 'in the seen', which is tantamount to projecting an 'I' into the seen, then you are neither here nor there nor in between.

In a number of earlier sermons we have sufficiently explained the significance of the two ends and the middle as well as the above, the below and the across in the middle. What do they signify?

As we happened to point out on an earlier occasion, it is by driving the peg of the conceit 'am' that a world is measured out, construed or postulated.<sup>11</sup> We also pointed out that the grammatical structure springs up along with it. That is to say, together with the notion 'am' there arises a 'here'. 'Here' am I, he is 'there' and you are 'yon' or in front of me. This is the basic ground plan for the grammatical structure, known to grammar as the first person, the second person and the third person.

A world comes to be measured out and a grammatical structure springs up. This, in fact, is the origin of proliferation, or *papañca*. So it is the freedom from that proliferation that is meant by the expression *nev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena*, "neither here nor there nor between the two". The notion of one's being in the world, or the bifurcation as 'I' and 'the world', is no longer there. *Es'ev'anto dukkhassa*, this, then, is the end of suffering, *Nibbāna*.

The fundamental first principles underlying this short exhortation of the Buddha could thus be inferred to some extent. We could perhaps elicit something more regarding the significance of the four key terms in question.

In the section of the fours in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* we come across four modes of noble usages, *cattāro ariya vohārā*,<sup>12</sup> namely:

1. *diṭṭhe diṭṭhavāditā*
2. *sute sutavāditā*
3. *mute mutavāditā*
4. *viññāte viññātavāditā*.

These four are

1. asserting the fact of having seen in regard to the seen,
2. asserting the fact of having heard in regard to the heard,
3. asserting the fact of having sensed in regard to the sensed,
4. asserting the fact of having cognized in regard to the cognized.

Generally speaking, these four noble usages stand for the principle of truthfulness. In some discourses, as well as in the *Vinayapitaka*, these terms are used in that sense. They are the criteria of the veracity of a statement in general, not so much in a deep sense.

However, there are different levels of truth. In fact, truthfulness is a question of giving evidence that runs parallel with one's level of experience. At higher levels of experience or realization, the evidence one gives also changes accordingly.

The episode of Venerable *MahāTissa Thera* is a case in view.<sup>13</sup> When he met a certain woman on his way, who displayed her teeth in a wily giggle, he simply grasped the sign of her teeth. He did not totally refrain from grasping a sign, but took it as an illustration of his meditation subject. Later, when that woman's husband, searching for her, came up to him and asked whether he had seen a woman, he replied that all he saw was a skeleton. Now that is a certain level of experience.

Similarly the concept of truthfulness is something that changes with levels of experience. There are various degrees of truth, based

on realization. The highest among them is called *paramasacca*.<sup>14</sup> As to what that is, the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* itself provides the answer in the following statement of the Buddha.

*Etañhi, bhikkhu, paramaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yadidaṃ amosadhammaṃ Nibbānaṃ.*<sup>15</sup> "Monk, this is the highest noble truth, namely *Nibbāna*, that is of a non-falsifying nature." All other truths are falsified when the corresponding level of experience is transcended. But *Nibbāna* is the highest truth, since it can never be falsified by anything beyond it.

The fact that it is possible to give evidence by this highest level of experience comes to light in the *Chabbisodhanasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In this discourse we find the Buddha instructing the monks as to how they should interrogate a fellow monk who claims to have attained *arahant*-hood. The interrogation has to follow certain criteria, one of which concerns the four standpoints *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta* and *viññāta*, the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized.

What sort of answer a monk who rightly claims to *arahant*-hood would give is also stated there by the Buddha. It runs as follows: *Diṭṭhe kho ahaṃ, āvuso, anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vipparamutto viṣaṃyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharāmi.*<sup>16</sup>

Here, then, is the highest mode of giving evidence in the court of Reality as an *arahant*. "Friends, with regard to the seen, I dwell unattracted, unrepelled, independent, uninvolved, released, unshackled, with a mind free from barriers."

He is unattracted, *anupāyo*, by lust and unrepelled, *anapāyo*, by hate. He is not dependent, *anissito*, on cravings, conceits and views. He is not involved, *appaṭibaddho*, with desires and attachments and is released, *vipparamutto*, from defilements. He is no longer shackled, *viṣaṃyutto*, by fetters and his mind is free from barriers.

What these barriers are, we can easily infer. They are the bifurcations such as the internal and the external, *ajjhatta bahiddhā*, which are so basic to what is called existence, *bhava*. Where there are barriers, there are also attachments, aversions and conflicts. Where there is a fence, there is defence and offence.

So the *arahant* dwells with a mind unpartitioned and barrierless, *vimariyādikatena cetasā*. To be able to make such a statement is the

highest standard of giving evidence in regard to the four noble usages.

It is also noteworthy that in the *Bāhiyasutta* the Buddha has presented the triple training of higher morality, higher concentration and higher wisdom, *adhisīla*, *adhicitta* and *adhipaññā*, through these four noble usages. The commentary, too, accepts this fact.<sup>17</sup> But this is a point that might need clarification. How are we to distinguish between morality, concentration and wisdom in this brief exhortation?

Now how does the exhortation begin? It opens with the words *tasmātiha te, Bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ*, "well then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus." This is an indication that the Buddha introduced him to a course of training, and this is the preliminary training:

*Diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati.* "In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized."

What is hinted at by this initial instruction is the training in higher morality, *adhisīlasikkhā*. The most important aspect of this training is the morality of sense-restraint, *indriya saṃvara sīla*. The first principles of sense-restraint are already implicit in this brief instruction.

If one stops short at just the seen in regard to the seen, one does not grasp a sign in it, or dwell on its details. There is no sorting out as 'this is good', 'this is bad'. That itself conduces to sense-restraint. So we may conclude that the relevance of this brief instruction to the morality of sense-restraint is in its enjoining the abstention from grasping a sign or dwelling on the details. That is what pertains to the training in higher morality, *adhisīlasikkhā*.

Let us see how it also serves the purpose of training in higher concentration. To stop at just the seen in the seen is to refrain from discursive thought, which is the way to abandon mental hindrances. It is discursive thought that brings hindrances in its train. So here we have what is relevant to the training in higher concentration as well.

Then what about higher wisdom, *adhipaññā*? Something more specific has to be said in this concern. What precisely is to be under-

stood by higher wisdom in this context? It is actually the freedom from imaginings, *maññanā*, and proliferation, *papañca*.

If one stops short at just the seen in the seen, such ramifications as mentioned in discourses like the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* do not come in at all. The tendency to objectify the seen and to proliferate it as 'in it', 'from it' and 'it is mine' receives no sanction. This course of training is helpful for the emancipation of the mind from imaginings and proliferations.

The Buddha has compared the six sense-bases, that is eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, to a deserted village.<sup>18</sup> *Suññaṃ idaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā*. "This is void of a self or anything belonging to a self." All these sense-bases are devoid of a self or anything belonging to a self. Therefore they are comparable to a deserted village, a village from which all inhabitants have fled.

The dictum 'in the seen there will be just the seen' is an advice conducive to the attitude of regarding the six sense-bases as a deserted village. This is what pertains to higher wisdom in the Buddha's exhortation.

*Papañca*, or prolific conceptualisation, is a process of transaction with whatever is seen, heard, sensed, etc. So here there is no process of such transaction. Also, when one trains oneself according to the instruction "in the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized", that identification implied by the term *tammayatā* will no longer be there.

Egotism, the conceit 'am' and all what prompts conceptual proliferation will come to an end. This kind of training uproots the peg of the conceit 'am', thereby bringing about the cessation of prolific conceptualisation, the cessation of becoming and the cessation of suffering.

We can therefore conclude that the entire triple training is enshrined in this exhortation. What happens as a result of this training is indicated by the riddle like terms *na tena, na tattha, nev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena*.

When the wisdom of the ascetic *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* had sufficiently matured by following the triple course of training, the Buddha gave the hint necessary for realization of that cessation of be-

coming, which is *Nibbāna*, in the following words: "Then, *Bāhiya*, you will not be by it. And when, *Bāhiya*, you are not by it, then, *Bāhiya*, you are not in it. And when, *Bāhiya*, you are not in it, then, *Bāhiya*, you are neither here nor there nor in between. This, itself, is the end of suffering."

This sermon, therefore, is one that succinctly presents the quintessence of the *Saddhamma*. It is said that the mind of the ascetic *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* was released from all influxes immediately on hearing this exhortation.

Now let us come back to the sequence of events in the story as mentioned in the *Udāna*. It was after the Buddha had already set out on his alms round that this sermon was almost wrenched from him with much insistence. When it had proved its worth, the Buddha continued with his alms round. Just then a cow with a young calf gored the *arahant Bāhiya Dārucīriya* to death.

While returning from his alms round with a group of monks, the Buddha saw the corpse of the *arahant Bāhiya*. He asked those monks to take the dead body on a bed and cremate it. He even told them to build a cairn enshrining his relics, saying: "Monks, a co-celibate of yours has passed away."

Those monks, having carried out the instructions, came back and reported to the Buddha. Then they raised the question: "Where has he gone after death, what is his after death state?" The Buddha replied: "Monks, *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* was wise, he lived up to the norm of the *Dhamma*, he did not harass me with questions on *Dhamma*. Monks, *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* has attained *Parinibbāna*."

In conclusion, the Buddha uttered the following verse of uplift:

*Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati,  
na tattha sukkā jotanti,  
ādicco nappakāsati,  
na tattha candimā bhāti,  
tamo tattha na vijjati.*

*Yadā ca attanāvedī,  
muni monena brāhmaṇo,  
atha rūpā arūpā ca,  
sukhadukkhā pamuccatī.*<sup>19</sup>

On the face of it, the verse seems to imply something like this:

"Where water, earth, fire and air  
Do not find a footing,  
There the stars do not shine,  
And the sun spreads not its lustre,  
The moon does not appear resplendent there,  
And no darkness is to be found there.

When the sage, the brahmin with wisdom,  
Understands by himself,  
Then is he freed from form and formless,  
And from pleasure and pain as well."

The commentary to the *Udāna*, *Paramatthadīpanī*, gives a strange interpretation to this verse. It interprets the verse as a description of the destination of the *arahant* *Bāhiya Dārucīriya* after he attained *Parinibbāna*, the place he went to.<sup>20</sup> Even the term *Nibbāna-gati* is used in that connection, the 'place' one goes to in attaining *Parinibbāna*. That place, according to the commentary, is not easily understood by worldlings. Its characteristics are said to be the following:

The four elements, earth, water, fire and air, are not there. No sun, or moon, or stars are there. The reason why the four elements are negated is supposed to be the fact that there is nothing that is compounded in the uncompounded *Nibbāna* element, into which the *arahant* passes away.

Since no sun, or moon, or stars are there in that mysterious place, one might wonder why there is no darkness either. The commentator tries to forestall the objection by stating that it is precisely because one might think that there should be darkness when those luminaries are not there, that the Buddha emphatically negates it. So the commentarial interpretation apparently leads us to the conclusion that



there is no darkness in the *Nibbāna* element, even though no sun or moon or stars are there.

The line of interpretation we have followed throughout this series of sermons allows us to depart from this commentarial trend. That place where earth, water, fire and air do not find a footing is not where the *arahant Bāhiya Dārucīriya* had ‘gone’ when he passed away. The commentator seems to have construed this verse as a reply the Buddha gave to the question raised by those monks. Their question was: "Where has he gone after death, what is his after death state?" They were curious about his borne.

But when we carefully examine the context, it becomes clear that they raised that question because they did not know that the corpse they cremated was that of an *arahant*. Had they known it, they would not have even asked that question. That is precisely the reason for the Buddha’s declaration that *Bāhiya* attained *Parinibbāna*, a fact he had not disclosed before. He added that *Bāhiya* followed the path of *Dhamma* without harassing him with questions and attained *Parinibbāna*.

Now that is the answer proper. To reveal the fact that *Bāhiya* attained *Parinibbāna* is to answer the question put by those inquisitive monks. Obviously they knew enough of the *Dhamma* to understand then, that their question about the borne and destiny of Venerable *Bāhiya* was totally irrelevant.

So then the verse uttered by the Buddha in conclusion was something extra. It was only a joyous utterance, a verse of uplift, coming as a grand finale to the whole episode.

Such verses of uplift are often to be met with in the *Udāna*. As we already mentioned, the verses in the *Udāna* have to be interpreted very carefully, because they go far beyond the implications of the story concerned.<sup>21</sup> They invite us to take a plunge into the ocean of *Dhamma*. Just one verse is enough. The text is small but deep. The verse in question is such a spontaneous utterance of joy. It is not the answer to the question ‘where did he go?’

Well, in that case, what are we to understand by the word *yattha*, "where"? We have already given a clue to it in our seventh sermon with reference to that non-manifestative consciousness, *anidassana*

*viññāṇa*. What the Buddha describes in this verse, is not the place where the Venerable *arahant Bāhiya* went after his demise, but the non-manifestative consciousness he had realized here and now, in his concentration of the fruit of *arahant-hood*, or *arahattaphalasamādhī*.

Let us hark back to the four lines quoted in the *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.

*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ,  
anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,  
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati.*<sup>22</sup>

"Consciousness which is non-manifestative,  
Endless, lustrous on all sides,  
It is here that water, earth,  
Fire and air no footing find."

The first two lines of the verse in the *Bāhiyasutta*, beginning with the correlative *yattha*, "where", find an answer in the last two lines quoted above from the *Kevaḍḍhasutta*. What is referred to as "it is here", is obviously the non-manifestative consciousness mentioned in the first two lines. That problematic place indicated by the word *yattha*, "where", in the *Bāhiyasutta*, is none other than this non-manifestative consciousness.

We had occasion to explain at length in what sense earth, water, fire and air find no footing in that consciousness. The ghostly elements do not haunt that consciousness. That much is clear. But how are we to understand the enigmatic reference to the sun, the moon and the stars? It is said that the stars do not shine in that non-manifestative consciousness, the sun does not spread its lustre and the moon does not appear resplendent in it, nor is there any darkness. How are we to construe all this?

Briefly stated, the Buddha's declaration amounts to the revelation that the sun, the moon and the stars fade away before the superior radiance of the non-manifestative consciousness, which is infinite and lustrous on all sides.

How a lesser radiance fades away before a superior one, we have already explained with reference to the cinema in a number of earlier sermons.<sup>23</sup> To sum up, the attention of the audience in a cinema is directed to the narrow beam of light falling on the screen. The audience, or the spectators, are seeing the scenes making up the film

show with the help of that beam of light and the thick darkness around.

This second factor is also very important. Scenes appear not simply because of the beam of light. The thickness of the darkness around is also instrumental in it. This fact is revealed when the cinema hall is fully lit up. If the cinema hall is suddenly illuminated, either by the opening of doors and windows or by some electrical device, the scenes falling on the screen fade away as if they were erased. The beam of light, which was earlier there, becomes dim before the superior light. The lesser lustre is superseded by a greater lustre.

We might sometimes be found fault with for harping on this cinema simile, on the ground that it impinges on the precept concerning abstinence from enjoying dramatic performances, song and music. But let us consider whether this cinema is something confined to a cinema hall.

In the open air theatre of the world before us, a similar phenomenon of supersedence is occurring. In the twilight glow of the evening the twinkling stars enable us to faintly figure out the objects around us, despite the growing darkness. Then the moon comes up. Now what happens to the twinkling little stars? They fade away, their lustre being superseded by that of the moon.

Then we begin to enjoy the charming scenes before us in the serene moonlit night. The night passes off. The day light gleam of the sun comes up. What happens then? The soft radiance of the moon wanes before the majestic lustre of the sun. The moon gets superseded and fades away. Full of confidence we are now watching the multitude of technicoloured scenes in this massive theatre of the world. In broad daylight, when sunshine is there, we have no doubt about our vision of objects around us.

But now let us suppose that the extraneous defilements in the mind of a noble disciple, treading the noble eightfold path, get dispelled, allowing its intrinsic lustre of wisdom to shine forth. What happens then? The stars, the moon and the sun get superseded by that light of wisdom. Even the forms that one had seen by twilight, moonlight and sunlight fade away and pale into insignificance. The umbra of form and the penumbra of the formless get fully erased.

In the previous sermon we happened to mention that form and space are related to each other, like the picture and its background. Now all this is happening in the firmament, which forms the background. We could enjoy the scenes of the world cinema, because of that darkness. The twilight, the moonlight and the sunlight are but various levels of that darkness.

The worldling thinks that one who has eyes must surely see if there is sunshine. He cannot think of anything beyond it. But the Buddha has declared that there is something more radiant than the radiance of the sun. *Natthi paññāsamā ābhā*, "there is no radiance comparable to wisdom".<sup>24</sup>

Let us hark back to a declaration by the Buddha we had already quoted in a previous sermon. *Catasso imā, bhikkhave, pabhā. Katamā catasso? Candappabhā, sūriyappabhā, aggippabhā, paññappabhā, imā kho, bhikkhave, catasso pabhā. Etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, imāsaṃ catunnaṃ pabhānaṃ, yad idaṃ paññappabhā*.<sup>25</sup> "Monks, there are these four lustres. What four? The lustre of the moon, the lustre of the sun, the lustre of fire, the lustre of wisdom. These, monks, are the four lustres. This, monks, is the highest among these four lustres, namely the lustre of wisdom."

So, then, we can now understand why the form and the formless fade away. This wisdom has a penetrative quality, for which reason it is called *nibbedhikā paññā*.<sup>26</sup> When one sees forms, one sees them together with their shadows. The fact that one sees shadows there, is itself proof that darkness has not been fully dispelled. If light comes from all directions, there is no shadow at all. If that light is of a penetrative nature, not even form will be manifest there.

Now it is mainly due to what is called 'form' and 'formless', *rūpa/rūpa*, that the worldling experiences pleasure and pain in a world that distinguishes between a 'pleasure' and a 'pain'.

Though we have departed from the commentarial path of exegesis, we are now in a position to interpret the cryptic verse in the *Bāhiyasutta* perhaps more meaningfully. Let us now recall the verse in question.

*Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati,  
na tattha sukkā jotanti,*

*ādicco nappakāsati,  
na tattha candimā bhāti,  
tamo tattha na vijjati.  
Yadā ca attanāvedī,  
muni monena brāhmaṇo,  
atha rūpā arūpā ca,  
sukhadukkhā pamuccati.<sup>27</sup>*

The verse can be fully explained along the lines of interpretation we have adopted. By way of further proof of the inadequacy of the commentarial explanation of the references to the sun, the moon and the stars in this verse, we may draw attention to the following points.

According to the commentary the verse is supposed to express that there are no sun, moon or stars in that mysterious place called *anupādisesa Nibbānadhātu*, which is incomprehensible to worldlings. We may, however, point out that the verbs used in the verse in this connection do not convey the sense that the sun, the moon and the stars are simply non-existent there. They have something more to say.

For instance, with regard to the stars it is said that there the stars do not shine, *na tattha sukkā jotanti*. If in truth and fact stars are not there, some other verb like *na dissanti*, "are not seen", or *na vijjanti*, "do not exist", could have been used.

With reference to the sun and the moon, also, similar verbs could have been employed. But what we actually find here, are verbs expressive of spreading light, shining, or appearing beautiful: *Na tattha sukkā jotanti*, "there the stars do not shine"; *ādicco nappakāsati*, "the sun spreads not its lustre"; *na tattha candimā bhāti*, "the moon does not appear resplendent there".

These are not mere prosaic statements. The verse in question is a joyous utterance, *Udānagāthā*, of extraordinary depth. There is nothing recondite about it.

In our earlier assessment of the commentarial interpretation we happened to lay special stress on the words 'even though'. We are now going to explain the significance of that emphasis. For the commentary, the line *tamo tattha na vijjati*, "no darkness is to be found there", is a big riddle. The sun, the moon and the stars are not there.

Even though they are not there, presumably, no darkness is to be found there.

However, when we consider the law of superseding, we have already mentioned, we are compelled to give a totally different interpretation. The sun, the moon and the stars are not manifest, precisely because of the light of that non-manifestative consciousness. As it is lustrous on all sides, *sabbato pabha*, there is no darkness there and luminaries like the stars, the sun and the moon do not shine there.

This verse of uplift thus reveals a wealth of information relevant to our topic. Not only the exhortation to *Bāhiya*, but this verse also throws a flood of light on the subject of *Nibbāna*.

That extraordinary place, which the commentary often identifies with the term *anupādisesa Nibbānadhātu*, is this mind of ours. It is in order to indicate the luminosity of this mind that the Buddha used those peculiar expressions in this verse of uplift.

What actually happens in the attainment to the fruit of *arahant*-hood? The worldling discerns the world around him with the help of six narrow beams of light, namely the six sense-bases. When the superior lustre of wisdom arises, those six sense-bases go down. This cessation of the six sense-bases could also be referred to as the cessation of name-and-form, *nāmarūpanirodha*, or the cessation of consciousness, *viññāṇanirodha*.

The cessation of the six sense-bases does not mean that one does not see anything. What one sees then is voidness. It is an in-‘sight’. He gives expression to it with the words *suñño loko*, "void is the world". What it means is that all the sense-objects, which the worldling grasps as real and truly existing, get penetrated through with wisdom and become non-manifest.

If we are to add something more to this interpretation of the *Bāhiyasutta* by way of review, we may say that this discourse illustrates the six qualities of the *Dhamma*, namely *svākkhāto*, well proclaimed, *sandiṭṭhiko*, visible here and now, *akāliko*, timeless, *ehi-passiko*, inviting to come and see, *opāyiko*, leading onward and *paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*, to be realized by the wise each one by himself. These six qualities are wonderfully exemplified by this discourse.

In a previous sermon we had occasion to bring up a simile of a dewdrop, dazzling in the morning sunshine.<sup>28</sup> The task of seeing the spectrum of rainbow colours through a tiny dewdrop hanging from a creeper or a leaf is one that calls for a high degree of mindfulness. Simply by standing or sitting with one's face towards the rising sun, one will not be able to catch a glimpse of the brilliant spectrum of rainbow colours through the dewdrop. It requires a particular viewpoint. Only when one focuses on that viewpoint, can one see it.

So it is with the spectrum of the six qualities of the *Dhamma*. Here, too, the correct viewpoint is a must, and that is right view. Reflection on the meaning of deep discourses helps one to straighten up right view.

Where right view is lacking, morality inclines towards dogmatic attachment to rituals, *sīlabbataparāmāsa*. Concentration turns out to be wrong concentration, *micchā samādhi*.

Like the one who sits facing the sun, one might be looking in the direction of the *Dhamma*, but right view is not something one inherits by merely going to refuge to the Buddha. It has to be developed with effort and proper attention. View is something that has to be straightened up. For *diṭṭhujukamma*, the act of straightening up one's view is reckoned as one of the ten skilful deeds, *kusalakamma*.

So however long one may sit with folded legs, gazing at the Buddha sun, one might not be able to see the six rainbow colours of the *Dhamma*. One may be short of just one-hundredth of an inch as the proper adjustment for right view. Yet it is a must. Once that adjustment is made, one immediately, then and there, *tavad'eva*, catches a glimpse of the spectrum of the *Dhamma* that the Buddha has proclaimed.

We have stressed the importance of right view in particular, because many are grappling with a self created problem, concerning the proper alignment between the triple training and the right view of the noble eightfold path.

Now as to the triple training, morality, concentration and wisdom, we find wisdom mentioned last. It seems, then, that we have to perfect morality first, then develop concentration, and only lastly wisdom. One need not think of wisdom before that. But when we come to the noble eightfold path, we find a different order of values. Here

right view takes precedence. As a matter of fact, in the *Mahācattārīsakasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* we find the Buddha repeatedly declaring emphatically *tatra, bhikkhave, sammā diṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā*, "monks, therein right view takes precedence".<sup>29</sup> Even in a context where the subject is morality, we find a similar statement. So how are we to resolve this issue?

In the noble eightfold path, pride of place is given to right view, which is representative of the wisdom group. As the well-known definition goes, right view and right thoughts belong to the wisdom group; right speech, right action and right livelihood come under the morality group; and right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration belong to the concentration group.

So in this way, in the noble eightfold path, wisdom comes first, then morality and lastly concentration. But in the context of these three groups, firstly comes morality, secondly concentration and lastly wisdom. Here, too, the answer given by the *arahant*-nun Venerable *Dhammadinnā* to the lay disciple *Visākha* comes to our aid.

The lay disciple *Visākha* poses the following question to Venerable *Dhammadinnā*: *Ariyena nu kho ayye aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā, udāhu tīhi khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito?* "Good lady, are the three groups morality, concentration and wisdom, included by the noble eightfold path, or is the noble eightfold path included by the three groups?"<sup>30</sup>

Even at that time there may have been some who raised such questions. That is probably the reason for such a query. Then the *arahant*-nun *Dhammadinnā* answers: *Na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā, tīhi ca kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito.* "Friend *Visākha*, it is not that the threefold training is included by the noble eightfold path, but the noble eightfold path is included by the threefold training."

Since this appears to be something of a tangle, let us try to illustrate the position with some other kind of tangle. Suppose someone is trying to climb up a long rope, made up of three strands. As he climbs up, his fingertips might come now in contact with the first strand, now with the second and now with the third. He is not worried about the order of the three strands, so long as they are well knit.



One can safely climb up, holding onto the three strands, only when they are firmly wound up into a sturdy rope.

All these questions seem to have arisen due to an attitude of taking too seriously the numerical order of things. To the noble disciple climbing up the rope of the noble eightfold path, there need not be any confusion between the numerical order of the triple training and that of the noble eightfold path. But if someone taking the cue from the order of the triple training neglects right view or ignores its prime import, he might end up confused.

All in all, we are now in a position to correctly assess the deep significance of the *Bāhiyasutta*. Here we have the quintessence of the entire *Saddhamma*. We are not confronted with heaps of perceptual data, which we are told today are essential requisites for admission into the ‘city’ of *Nibbāna*.

For the ordinary worldling, amassing a particular set of percepts or concepts seems a qualification for entering *Nibbāna*. But what we have here, is a way of liberating the mind even from latencies to percepts, cf. *saññā nānuseñti*, *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*, "perceptions do not lie latent."<sup>31</sup> There is no heaping up anew.

What are called "extraneous taints", *āgantukā upakkilesā*,<sup>32</sup> are not confined to the well known defilements in the world. They include all the rust and dust we have been collecting throughout this long *samsāra*, with the help of the influxes, *āsavā*. They include even the heap of percepts which the world calls ‘knowledge’. Even numerals are part of it.

The Buddha has briefly expressed here the mode of practice for disabusing the mind from all such taints. Therefore there is no reason for underestimating the value of this discourse, by calling it *vohāra desanā*, conventional teaching. This discourse in the *Udāna* is one that is truly ‘up’-lifting.

It indeed deserves a paean of joy.

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<sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.

<sup>2</sup> Ud 8, *Bāhiyasutta*.

- <sup>3</sup> Sn 813, *Jarāsutta*.  
<sup>4</sup> Sn 757, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*; see sermon 13.  
<sup>5</sup> A IV 386, *Samiddhisutta*; see sermon 12.  
<sup>6</sup> See sermons 12 and 13.  
<sup>7</sup> M I 3, *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> See sermon 13.  
<sup>9</sup> According to A I 24 *Bāhiya* was outstanding for his *hippābhinnā*.  
<sup>10</sup> See sermon 13.  
<sup>11</sup> See sermon 10.  
<sup>12</sup> A II 246, *Catutthavohārasutta*.  
<sup>13</sup> Vism 21.  
<sup>14</sup> The term occurs e.g. at M I 480, *Tevijjavacchagottasutta*; at M II 173, *Cankāsutta*; and at A II 115, *Patodasutta*.  
<sup>15</sup> M III 245, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> M III 29, *Chabbisodhanasutta*.  
<sup>17</sup> Ud-a 90.  
<sup>18</sup> S IV 174, *Āsīvisasutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> Ud 9, *Bāhiyasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> Ud-a 98.  
<sup>21</sup> See sermon 1.  
<sup>22</sup> D I 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> See sermons 5, 7 and 9.  
<sup>24</sup> S I 6, *Natthiputtasamasutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> A II 139, *Pabhāsutta*; see sermon 7.  
<sup>26</sup> E.g. S II 45, *Bhikkhusutta*; or A II 178, *Ummaggasutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> Ud 9, *Bāhiyasutta*.  
<sup>28</sup> See sermon 9.  
<sup>29</sup> M III 71, *Mahācattārīsakasutta*.  
<sup>30</sup> M I 301, *CūḷaVedallasutta*.  
<sup>31</sup> M I 108, *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*.  
<sup>32</sup> A I 10, *Accharāsaṅghātavagga*.

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## කතු හිමියන්ගේ සිංහල කෘති

සැ.යු.: මෙම කෘති ලේඛනය සරලකයට මුල්තැන දුන් අංක අනුපිළිවෙලක් සහිතව සකස්වී ඇති බවත්, ලේඛනයේ අගභරයේ එන කෘති බොහෝ දුරට ගැඹුරු විය හැකි බවත්, පාඨකයින් දැනුවත් කිරීම් වශයෙන් සඳහන් කරනු කැමැත්තෙමි.

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