

Nibbana Sermons - Part 1

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

*Etam santam, etam paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ*

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

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks.

Recently we have had an occasion to listen to a series of sermons on *Nibbāna* and there have been differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of some deep *suttas* on *Nibbāna* in those sermons. And so the venerable Great Preceptor suggested to me that it would be useful to this group if I would give a set of sermons on *Nibbāna*, touching on those controversial points.

At first, for many reasons, I hesitated to accept this invitation for a serious task, but then, as the venerable Great Preceptor repeatedly encouraged me on this, I gave some thought as to how best I could set about doing it. And it occurred to me that it would be best if I could address these sermons directly to the task before us in this Nissarana Vanaya, and that is meditative attention, rather than dealing with those deep controversial *suttas* in academic isolation. And that is why I have selected the above quotation as the theme for the entire set of sermons, hoping that it would help create the correct atmosphere of meditative attention.

*Etam santam etam paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*

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

This in fact is a meditation subject in itself, a *kammaṭṭhāna*. This is the reflection on the peace of *Nibbāna*, *upasamānussati*. So if we can successfully make use of this as both the heading and the theme of these sermons, we would be in a position to understand those six qualities of the *Dhamma*. We are told that the *Dhamma* is *svākkhāta*, that it is well-proclaimed, *sandiṭṭhika*, can be seen here and now, *akālika*, timeless, *ehi-passika*, inviting one to come and see, *opanayika*, leading one onwards, *paccattaṃ veditaṃ viññūhi*, that it can be understood by the wise each one by himself.

This set of sermons would have fulfilled its purpose if it drives home the true significance of these six qualities of the *Dhamma*.

Now at the very outset I would like to say a few things by way of preparing the background and I do hope that this assembly would bear with me for saying certain things that I will be compelled to say in this concern. By way of background something has to be said as to why there are so many complications with regard to the meaning of some of the deep *suttas* on *Nibbāna*.

There is a popular belief that the commentaries are finally traceable to a miscellany of the Buddha word scattered here and there, as *pakiṇṇakadesanā*. But the true state of affairs seems to be rather different. Very often the commentaries are unable to say something conclusive regarding the meaning of deep *suttas*. So they simply give some possible interpretations and the reader finds himself at a loss to choose the correct one. Sometimes the commentaries go at a tangent and miss the correct interpretation. Why the commentaries are silent on some deep *suttas* is also a problem to modern day scholars. There are some historical reasons leading to this state of affairs in the commentaries.

In the *Āṇisutta* of the *Nidānavagga* in the *Samyutta Nikāya* we find the Buddha making certain prophetic utterances regarding the dangers that will befall the *Sāsana* in the future. It is said that in times to come, monks will lose interest in those deep *suttas* which deal with matters transcendental, that they would not listen to those *suttas* that have to do with the idea of emptiness, *suññatā*. They would not think it even worthwhile learning or pondering over the meanings of those *suttas*:

*Ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā
suññatappaṭisaṃyuttā, tesu bhaññamānesu na sussūssisanti na sotaṃ odahissanti na
aññā cittaṃ upatthāpessanti na te dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpūṇitabbaṃ
maññissanti.*

There is also another historical reason that can be adduced. An idea got deeply rooted at a certain stage in the *Sāsana* history that what is contained in the *Sutta Piṭaka* is simply the conventional teaching and so it came to imply that there is nothing so deep in these *suttas*. This notion also had its share in the present lack of interest in these *suttas*. According to *Manorathapūraṇī*, the *Aṅguttara* commentary, already at an early stage in the *Sāsana* history of Sri Lanka, there had been a debate between those who upheld the precept and those who stood for realization.¹[4] And it is said that those who upheld the precept won the day. The final conclusion was that, for the continuity of the *Sāsana*, precept itself is enough, not so much the realization.

Of course the efforts of the reciter monks of old for the preservation of the precept in the midst of droughts and famines and other calamitous situations are certainly praiseworthy. But the unfortunate thing about it was this: the basket of the Buddha word came to be passed on from hand to hand in the dark, so much so that there was the risk of some valuable things slipping out in the process.

Also there have been certain semantic developments in the commentarial period, and this will be obvious to anyone searching for the genuine *Dhamma*. It seems that there had been a tendency in the commentarial period to elaborate even on some lucid words in the *suttas*, simply as a commentarial requirement, and this led to the in-

clusion of many complicated ideas. By too much overdrawing in the commentaries, the deeper meanings of the *Dhamma* got obscured. As a matter of fact, the depth of the *Dhamma* has to be seen through lucidity, just as much as one sees the bottom of a tank only when the water is lucid.

Dve nāma kiṃ?

Nāmañca rūpañca.

"What is the 'two'?"

"Name and form."

This is the second out of the ten questions Buddha had put to the Venerable *sāmanera Sopāka* who had attained *Arahant*-ship at the age of seven. It is like asking a child: "Can you count up to ten?" All the ten questions were deep, the tenth being on *Arahant*-ship. But of course Venerable *Sopāka* gave the right answer each time. Now it is the second question and its answer that we are concerned with here: *nāmañca rūpañca*. In fact, this is a basic teaching in insight training.

It is obvious that *nāma* means 'name', and in the *suttas* also, *nāma*, when used by itself, means 'name'. However when we come to the commentaries we find some kind of hesitation to recognize this obvious meaning. Even in the present context, the commentary, *Paramatthajotikā*, explains the word 'name' so as to mean 'bending'. It says that all immaterial states are called *nāma*, in the sense that they bend towards their respective objects and also because the mind has the nature of inclination: *Ārammaṇābhimukhaṃ namanato, cittassa ca natihetuto sabbampi arūpaṃ 'nāman'ti vuccati*.

And this is the standard definition of *nāma* in *Abhidhamma* compendiums and commentaries. The idea of bending towards an object is brought in to explain the word *nāma*. It may be that they thought it too simple an interpretation to explain *nāma* with reference to 'name', particularly because it is a term that has to do with deep insight. However as far as the teachings in the *suttas* are concerned, *nāma* still has a great depth even when it is understood in the sense of 'name'.

Nāmaṃ sabbam anvabhavi,

nāmā bhiyyo na vijjati,

nāmassa ekadhammassa,

sabbeva vasamanvagū.

"Name has conquered everything,

There is nothing greater than name,

All have gone under the sway

Of this one thing called name."

Also there is another verse of the same type, but unfortunately its original meaning is often ignored by the present day commentators:

*Akkheyyasaññino sattā,
akkheyyasmiṃ patitṭhitā,
akkheyyaṃ apariññāya,
yogam āyanti maccuno.*

"Beings are conscious of what can be named,
They are established on the nameable,
By not comprehending the nameable things,
They come under the yoke of death."

All this shows that the word *nāma* has a deep significance even when it is taken in the sense of 'name'.

But now let us see whether there is something wrong in rendering *nāma* by 'name' in the case of the term *nāma-rūpa*. To begin with, let us turn to the definition of *nāma-rūpa* as given by the Venerable *Sāriputta* in the *Sammāditṭhisutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

*Vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phasso, manasikāro - idaṃ vuccatāvuso, nāmaṃ; cattāri ca mahābhūtāni, catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ - idaṃ vuccatāvuso, rūpaṃ. Iti idañca nāmaṃ idañca rūpaṃ - idam vuccatāvuso nāma-rūpaṃ.*2[9] "Feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention - this, friend, is called 'name'. The four great primaries and form dependent on the four great primaries - this, friend, is called 'form'. So this is 'name' and this is 'form' - this, friend, is called 'name-and-form'."

Well, this seems lucid enough as a definition but let us see, whether there is any justification for regarding feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention as 'name'. Suppose there is a little child, a toddler, who is still unable to speak or understand language. Someone gives him a rubber ball and the child has seen it for the first time. If the child is told that it is a rubber ball, he might not understand it. How does he get to know that object? He smells it, feels it, and tries to eat it, and finally rolls it on the floor. At last he understands that it is a plaything. Now the child has recognised the rubber ball not by the name that the world has given it, but by those factors included under 'name' in *nāma-rūpa*, namely feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention.

This shows that the definition of *nāma* in *nāma-rūpa* takes us back to the most fundamental notion of ‘name’, to something like its prototype. The world gives a name to an object for purposes of easy communication. When it gets the sanction of others, it becomes a convention.

While commenting on the verse just quoted, the commentator also brings in a bright idea. As an illustration of the sweeping power of name, he points out that if any tree happens to have no name attached to it by the world, it would at least be known as the ‘nameless tree’. Now as for the child, even such a usage is not possible. So it gets to know an object by the aforesaid method. And the factors involved there, are the most elementary constituents of name.

Now it is this elementary name-and-form world that a meditator also has to understand, however much he may be conversant with the conventional world. But if a meditator wants to understand this name-and-form world, he has to come back to the state of a child, at least from one point of view. Of course in this case the equanimity should be accompanied by knowledge and not by ignorance. And that is why a meditator makes use of mindfulness and full awareness, *satisampajañña*, in his attempt to understand name-and-form.

Even though he is able to recognize objects by their conventional names, for the purpose of comprehending name-and-form, a meditator makes use of those factors that are included under ‘name’: feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. All these have a specific value to each individual and that is why the *Dhamma* has to be understood each one by himself - *paccattaṃ veditabbo*. This *Dhamma* has to be realized by oneself. One has to understand one’s own world of name-and-form by oneself. No one else can do it for him. Nor can it be defined or denoted by technical terms.

Now it is in this world of name-and-form that suffering is found. According to the Buddha, suffering is not out there in the conventional world of worldly philosophers. It is to be found in this very name-and-form world. So the ultimate aim of a meditator is to cut off the craving in this name-and-form. As it is said: *acchecchi taṇhaṃ idha nāmarūpe*.

Now if we are to bring in a simile to clarify this point, the Buddha is called the incomparable surgeon, *sallakatto anuttaro*. Also he is sometimes called *taṇhāsallassa hantāraṃ*, one who removes the dart of craving. So the Buddha is the incomparable surgeon who pulls out the poison-tipped arrow of craving.

We may say therefore that, according to the *Dhamma*, *nāma-rūpa*, or name-and-form, is like the wound in which the arrow is embedded. When one is wounded by a poison-tipped arrow, the bandage has to be put, not on the archer or on his bow-string, but on the wound itself. First of all the wound has to be well located and cleaned up. Similarly, the comprehension of name-and-form is the preliminary step in the treatment of the wound caused by the poison-tipped arrow of craving.

And it is for that purpose that a meditator has to pay special attention to those basic components of ‘name’ - feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention - however much he may be proficient in words found in worldly usage. It may even appear as a

process of unlearning down to childlike simplicity. But of course, the equanimity implied there, is not based on ignorance but on knowledge.

We find ourselves in a similar situation with regard to the significance of *rūpa* in *nāma-rūpa*. Here too we have something deep, but many take *nāma-rūpa* to mean ‘mind and matter’. Like materialists, they think there is a contrast between mind and matter. But according to the *Dhamma* there is no such rigid distinction. It is a pair that is interrelated and taken together it forms an important link in the chain of *paṭicca samuppāda*.

Rūpa exists in relation to ‘name’ and that is to say that form is known with the help of ‘name’. As we saw above, that child got a first-hand knowledge of the rubber ball with the help of contact, feeling, perception, intention and attention. Now in the definition of ‘form’ as *cattāri ca mahābhūtāni, catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya rūpaṃ* the four great primaries are mentioned because they constitute the most primary notion of ‘form’. Just as much as feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention represent the most primary notion of ‘name’, conventionally so called, even so the four great primaries form the basis for the primary notion of ‘form’, as the world understands it.

It is not an easy matter to recognize these primaries. They are evasive like ghosts. But out of their interplay we get the perception of form, *rūpasaññā*. In fact what is called *rūpa* in this context is *rūpasaññā*. It is with reference to the behaviour of the four great elements that the world builds up its concept of form. Its perception, recognition and designation of form is in terms of that behaviour. And that behaviour can be known with the help of those members representing name.

The earth element is recognized through the qualities of hardness and softness, the water element through the qualities of cohesiveness and dissolution, the fire element through hotness and coolness, and the wind element through motion and inflation. In this way one gets acquainted with the nature of the four great primaries. And the perception of form, *rūpasaññā*, that one has at the back of one’s mind, is the net result of that acquaintance. So this is *nāma-rūpa*. This is one’s world. The relationship between *rūpa* and *rūpasaññā* will be clear from the following verse:

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca,

asesaṃ uparujjhati,

paṭighaṃ rūpasaññā ca,

etthesā chijjate jaṭā.

This is a verse found in the *Jaṭāsutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. In that *sutta* we find a deity putting a riddle before the Buddha for solution:

Anto jaṭā bahi jaṭā,

jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā,

taṃ taṃ Gotama pucchāmi,

ko imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ.

"There is a tangle within, and a tangle without,

The world is entangled with a tangle.

About that, oh *Gotama*, I ask you,

Who can disentangle this tangle?"

The Buddha answers the riddle in three verses, the first of which is fairly well known, because it happens to be the opening verse of the *Visuddhimagga*:

Sīle patitṭhāya naro sapañño,

cittaṃ paññañca bhāvayaṃ,

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu,

so imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ.

This means that a wise monk, established in virtue, developing concentration and wisdom, being ardent and prudent, is able to disentangle this tangle. Now this is the second verse:

Yesaṃ rāgo ca doso ca,

avijjā ca virājitā,

khīṇāsavā arahanto,

tesaṃ vijaṭitā jaṭā.

"In whom lust, hate

And ignorance have faded away,

Those influx-free *Arahants*,

It is in them that the tangle is disentangled."

It is the third verse that is relevant to our topic.

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca,

asesaṃ uparujjhati,

paṭighaṃ rūpasaññā ca,

etthesā chijjate jaṭā.

"Where name and form

As well as resistance and the perception of form

Are completely cut off,

It is there that the tangle gets snapped."

The reference here is to *Nibbāna*. It is there that the tangle is disentangled.

The coupling of name-and-form with *paṭigha* and *rūpasāññā* in this context, is significant. Here *paṭigha* does not mean 'repugnance', but 'resistance'. It is the resistance which comes as a reaction to inert matter. For instance, when one knocks against something in passing, one turns back to recognize it. Sense reaction is something like that.

The Buddha has said that the worldling is blind until at least the *Dhamma*-eye arises in him. So the blind worldling recognizes an object by the very resistance he experiences in knocking against that object.

Paṭigha and *rūpasāññā* form a pair. *Paṭigha* is that experience of resistance which comes by the knocking against an object, and *rūpasāññā*, as perception of form, is the resulting recognition of that object. The perception is in terms of what is hard, soft, hot or cold. Out of such perceptions common to the blind worldlings, arises the conventional reality, the basis of which is the world.

Knowledge and understanding are very often associated with words and concepts, so much so that if one knows the name of a thing, one is supposed to know it. Because of this misconception the world is in a tangle. Names and concepts, particularly the nouns, perpetuate the ignorance in the world. Therefore insight is the only path of release. And that is why a meditator practically comes down to the level of a child in order to understand name and form. He may even have to pretend to be a patient in slowing down his movements for the sake of developing mindfulness and full awareness.

So we see that there is something really deep in *nāma-rūpa*, even if we render it as 'name-and-form'. There is an implicit connection with 'name' as conventionally so called, but unfortunately this connection is ignored in the commentaries, when they bring in the idea of 'bending' to explain the word 'name'. So we need not hesitate to render *nāma-rūpa* by 'name-and-form'. Simple as it may appear, it goes deeper than the worldly concepts of name and form.

Now if we are to summarise all what we have said in this connection, we may say: 'name' in 'name-and-form' is a **formal** name. It is an apparent name. 'Form' in 'name-and-form' is a **nominal** form. It is a form only in name.

We have to make a similar comment on the meaning of the word *Nibbāna*. Here too one can see some unusual semantic developments in the commentarial period. It is

very common these days to explain the etymology of the word *Nibbāna* with the help of a phrase like: *Vānasāṅkhātāya taṅhāya nikkhantattā*.3[15] And that is to say that *Nibbāna* is so called because it is an exit from craving which is a form of weaving.

To take the element *vāna* in the word to mean a form of weaving is as good as taking *nāma* in *nāma-rūpa* as some kind of bending. It is said that craving is a kind of weaving in the sense that it connects up one form of existence with another and the prefix *ni* is said to signify the exit from that weaving.

But nowhere in the *suttas* do we get this sort of etymology and interpretation. On the other hand it is obvious that the *suttas* use the word *Nibbāna* in the sense of 'extinguishing' or 'extinction'. In fact this is the sense that brings out the true essence of the *Dhamma*.

For instance the *Ratanasutta*, which is so often chanted as a *paritta*, says that the *Arahants* go out like a lamp: *Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyaṃ padīpo*.4[16] "Those wise ones get extinguished even like this lamp."

The simile of a lamp getting extinguished is also found in the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.5[17] Sometimes it is the figure of a torch going out: *Pajjotass'eva nibbānaṃ, vimokho cetaso ahu*, "the mind's release was like the extinguishing of a torch."i[18]

The simile of the extinction of a fire is very often brought in as an illustration of *Nibbāna* and in the *Aggīvacchagottasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* we find the Buddha presenting it as a sustained simile, giving it a deeper philosophical dimension.ii[19] Now when a fire burns, it does so with the help of firewood. When a fire is burning, if someone were to ask us: "What is burning?" - what shall we say as a reply? Is it the wood that is burning or the fire that is burning? The truth of the matter is that the wood burns because of the fire and the fire burns because of the wood. So it seems we already have here a case of relatedness of this to that, *idappaccayatā*. This itself shows that there is a very deep significance in the fire simile.

Nibbāna as a term for the ultimate aim of this *Dhamma* is equally significant because of its allusion to the going out of a fire. In the *Asāṅkhatasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* as many as thirty-three terms are listed to denote this ultimate aim.iii[20] But out of all these epithets, *Nibbāna* became the most widely used, probably because of its significant allusion to the fire. The fire simile holds the answer to many questions relating to the ultimate goal.

The wandering ascetic *Vacchagotta*, as well as many others, accused the Buddha of teaching a doctrine of annihilation: *Sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpeti*.iv[21] Their accusation was that the Buddha proclaims the annihilation, destruction and non-existence of a being that is existent. And the Buddha answered them fairly and squarely with the fire simile.

"Now if a fire is burning in front of you dependent on grass and twigs as fuel, you would know that it is burning dependently and not independently, that there is no fire in the abstract. And when the fire goes out, with the exhaustion of that fuel, you would know that it has gone out because the conditions for its existence are no more."

As a sidelight to the depth of this argument it may be mentioned that the *Pāli* word *upādāna* used in such contexts has the sense of both 'fuel' as well as 'grasping', and in fact, fuel is something that the fire grasps for its burning. *Upādānapaccayā bhavo*, "dependent on grasping is existence".v[22] These are two very important links in the doctrine of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*.

The eternalists, overcome by the craving for existence, thought that there is some permanent essence in existence as a reality. But what had the Buddha to say about existence? He said that what is true for the fire is true for existence as well. That is to say that existence is dependent on grasping. So long as there is a grasping, there is an existence. As we saw above, the firewood is called *upādāna* because it catches fire. The fire catches hold of the wood, and the wood catches hold of the fire. And so we call it firewood. This is a case of a relation of this to that, *idappaccayatā*. Now it is the same with what is called 'existence', which is not an absolute reality.

Even in the *Vedic* period there was the dilemma between 'being' and 'non-being'. They wondered whether being came out of non-being, or non-being came out of being. *Katham asataḥ sat jāyeta*, "How could being come out of non-being?"vi[23] In the face of this dilemma regarding the first beginnings, they were sometimes forced to conclude that there was neither non-being nor being at the start, *nāsadāsīt no sadāsīt tadānīm*.vii[24] Or else in the confusion they would sometimes leave the matter unsolved, saying that perhaps only the creator knew about it.

All this shows what a lot of confusion these two words *sat* and *asat*, being and non-being, had created for the philosophers. It was only the Buddha who presented a perfect solution, after a complete reappraisal of the whole problem of existence. He pointed out that existence is a fire kept up by the fuel of grasping, so much so that, when grasping ceases, existence ceases as well.

In fact the fire simile holds the answer to the tetralemma included among the ten unexplained points very often found mentioned in the *suttas*. It concerns the state of the *Tathāgata* after death, whether he exists, does not exist, both or neither. The presumption of the questioner is that one or the other of these four must be and could be answered in the affirmative.

The Buddha solves or dissolves this presumptuous tetralemma by bringing in the fire simile. He points out that when a fire goes out with the exhaustion of the fuel, it is absurd to ask in which direction the fire has gone. All that one can say about it, is that the fire has gone out: *Nibbuto tveva saṅkhaṃ gacchati*, "it comes to be reckoned as 'gone out'".viii[25]

It is just a reckoning, an idiom, a worldly usage, which is not to be taken too literally. So this illustration through the fire simile drives home to the worldling the absurdity of his presumptuous tetralemma of the *Tathāgata*.

In the *Upasīvasutta* of the *Pārāyaṇavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta* we find the lines:

Accī yathā vātavegena khitto,

atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṅkhaṃ,

"Like the flame thrown out by the force of the wind

Reaches its end, it cannot be reckoned."ix[26]

Here the reckoning is to be understood in terms of the four propositions of the tetralemma. Such reckonings are based on a total misconception of the phenomenon of fire.

It seems that the deeper connotations of the word *Nibbāna* in the context of *paṭicca samuppāda* were not fully appreciated by the commentators. And that is why they went in search of a new etymology. They were too shy of the implications of the word 'extinction'. Probably to avoid the charge of nihilism they felt compelled to reinterpret certain key passages on *Nibbāna*. They conceived *Nibbāna* as something existing out there in its own right. They would not say where, but sometimes they would even say that it is everywhere. With an undue grammatical emphasis they would say that it is on coming to that *Nibbāna* that lust and other defilements are abandoned: *Nibbānaṃ āgamma rāgādayo khīṇāti ekameva nibbānaṃ rāgakkhaya dosakkhaya mohakkhaya ti vuccati.*x[27]

But what do we find in the joyous utterances of the *theras* and *therīs* who had realized *Nibbāna*? As recorded in such texts as *Thera-* and *Therī-gāthā* they would say: *Sītībhūto'smi nibbuto*, "I am grown cool, extinguished as I am."xi[28] The words *sītībhūta* and *nibbuta* had a cooling effect even to the listener, though later scholars found them inadequate.

Extinction is something that occurs within an individual and it brings with it a unique bliss of appeasement. As the *Ratanasutta* says: *Laddhā mudhā nibbutiṃ bhuñjamānā*, "they experience the bliss of appeasement won free of charge."xii[29] Normally, appeasement is won at a cost, but here we have an appeasement that comes gratis.

From the worldly point of view 'extinction' means annihilation. It has connotations of a precipice that is much dreaded. That is why the commentators conceived of it as something out there, on reaching which the defilements are abandoned, *nibbānaṃ āgamma rāgādayo khīṇāti*. Sometimes they would say that it is on seeing *Nibbāna* that craving is destroyed.

There seems to be some contradiction in the commentarial definitions of *Nibbāna*. On the one hand we have the definition of *Nibbāna* as the exit from craving, which is called a 'weaving'. And on the other it is said that it is on seeing *Nibbāna* that craving is destroyed. To project *Nibbāna* into a distance and to hope that craving will be destroyed only on seeing it, is something like trying to build a staircase to a palace one cannot yet see. In fact this is a simile which the Buddha had used in his criticism of the *Brahmin's* point of view.xiii[30]

In the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta* we have a very clear statement of the third noble truth. Having first said that the second noble truth is craving, the Buddha goes on to define the third noble truth in these words: *Tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*.xiv[31]

This is to say that the third noble truth is the complete fading away, cessation, giving up, relinquishment of that very craving. That it is the release from and non-attachment to that very craving. In other words it is the destruction of this very mass of suffering which is just before us.

In the *suttas* the term *taṇhakkhaya*, the destruction of craving, is very often used as a term for *Nibbāna*.xv[32] But the commentator says that destruction alone is not *Nibbāna*: *Khayamattaṃ na nibbānaṃ*.xvi[33] But the destruction of craving itself is called the highest bliss in the following verse of the *Udāna*:

*Yañca kāmasukhaṃ loke,
yaṃ c'idaṃ diviyaṃ sukhaṃ,
taṇhakkhaya sukhass'ete,
kalaṃ n'agghanti soḷasiṃ*.xvii[34]

"Whatever bliss from sense-desires there is in the world,

Whatever divine bliss there is,

All these are not worth one-sixteenth

Of the bliss of the destruction of craving."

Many of the verses found in the *Udāna* are extremely deep and this is understandable, since *udāna* means a 'joyous utterance'. Generally a joyous utterance comes from the very depths of one's heart, like a sigh of relief. As a matter of fact one often finds that the concluding verse goes far deeper in its implications than the narrative concerned. For instance, in the *Udapānasutta*, we get the following joyous utterance, coming from the Buddha himself:

*Kiṃ kayirā udapānena,
āpā ce sabbadā siyuṃ,
taṇhāya mūlato chetvā,
kissa pariyesanaṃ care*.xviii[35]

"What is the use of a well,

If water is there all the time,

Having cut craving at the root,

In search of what should one wander?"

This shows that the destruction of craving is not a mere destruction.

Craving is a form of thirst and that is why *Nibbāna* is sometimes called *pipāsavinayo*, the dispelling of the thirst.xix[36] To think that the destruction of craving is not sufficient is like trying to give water to one who has already quenched his thirst. But the destruction of craving has been called the highest bliss. One who has quenched his thirst for good, is aware of that blissful experience. When he sees the world running here and there in search of water, he looks within and sees the well-spring of his bliss.

However to most of our scholars the term *taṇhakkhaya* appeared totally negative and that is why they hesitated to recognize its value. In such conventional usages as *Nibbānaṃ āgamma* they found a grammatical excuse to separate that term from *Nibbāna*.

According to the Buddha the cessation of existence is *Nibbāna* and that means *Nibbāna* is the realization of the cessation of existence. Existence is said to be an eleven-fold fire. So the entire existence is a raging fire. Lust, hate, delusion - all these are fires. Therefore *Nibbāna* may be best rendered by the word 'extinction'. When once the fires are extinguished, what more is needed?

But unfortunately Venerable *Buddhaghosa* was not prepared to appreciate this point of view. In his *Visuddhimagga* as well as in the commentaries *Sāratthappakāsinī* and *Sammohavinodanī*, he gives a long discussion on *Nibbāna* in the form of an argument with an imaginary heretic.xx[37] Some of his arguments are not in keeping with either the letter or the spirit of the *Dhamma*.

First of all he gets the heretic to put forward the idea that the destruction of lust, hate and delusion is *Nibbāna*. Actually the heretic is simply quoting the Buddha word, for in the *Nibbānasutta* of the *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta* the destruction of lust, hate and delusion is called *Nibbāna: Rāgakkhaya, dosakkhaya, mohakkhaya - idaṃ vuccati nibbānaṃ*.xxi[38]

The words *rāgakkhaya, dosakkhaya* and *mohakkhaya* together form a synonym of *Nibbāna*, but the commentator interprets it as three synonyms. Then he argues out with the imaginary heretic that if *Nibbāna* is the extinguishing of lust it is something common even to the animals, for they also extinguish their fires of lust through enjoyment of the corresponding objects of sense.xxii[39] This argument ignores the deeper sense of the word extinction, as it is found in the *Dhamma*.

In the *Māgaṇḍīyasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* the Buddha gives the simile of a man with a skin disease sitting beside a pit of hot embers to explain the position of lustful beings in the world.xxiii[40] That man is simply trying to assuage his pains by the heat of the fire. It is an attempt to warm up, not to cool down. Similarly what the lustful beings in the world are doing in the face of the fires of lust is a warming up. It can in no way be compared to the extinction and the cooling down of the *Arahants*.

As the phrase *nibbutiṃ bhūñjamānā* implies, that extinction is a blissful experience for the *Arahants*. It leaves a permanent effect on the *Arahant*, so much so that upon reflection he sees that his influxes are extinct, just as a man with his hands and feet cut off, knows upon reflection that his limbs are gone.xxiv[41] It seems that the deeper implications of the word *Nibbāna* have been obscured by a set of arguments which are rather misleading.

In fact I came forward to give these sermons for three reasons: Firstly because the venerable Great Preceptor invited me to do so. Secondly in the hope that it will be of some benefit to my co-dwellers in the *Dhamma*. And thirdly because I myself felt rather concerned about the inadequacy of the existing interpretations.

What we have said so far is just about the word *Nibbāna* as such. Quite a number of *suttas* on *Nibbāna* will be taken up for discussion. This is just a preamble to show that the word *Nibbāna* in the sense of ‘extinction’ has a deeper dimension, which has some relevance to the law of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*.

By bringing in an etymology based on the element *vāna*, much of the original significance of the word *Nibbāna* came to be undermined. On quite a number of occasions the Buddha has declared that the cessation of suffering is *Nibbāna*, or else that the destruction of craving is *Nibbāna*. Terms like *dukkhanirodho* and *tanhakkhayo* have been used as synonyms. If they are synonyms, there is no need to make any discrimination with regard to some of them, by insisting on a periphrastic usage like *āgamma*.

Yet another important aspect of the problem is the relation of *Nibbāna* to the holy life or *brahmacariya*. It is said that when the holy life is lived out to the full, it culminates in *Nibbāna*.

In the *Rādhasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* we find the Venerable *Rādha* putting a series of questions to the Buddha to get an explanation.xxv[42] First of all he asks:

Sammādaṣṣanaṃ pana, bhante, kimatthiyaṃ? "For what purpose is right vision?" And the Buddha gives the answer: *Sammādaṣṣanaṃ kho, Rādha, nibbidatthaṃ, "Rādha, right vision is for purposes of disgust or dejection".* And that is to say, disgust for *saṃsāra*.

The next question is: for what purpose is disgust? And the Buddha answers: disgust is for dispassion. What is the purpose of dispassion? The purpose of dispassion is release. What is the purpose of release? The purpose of release is *Nibbāna*. Last of all Venerable *Rādha* puts the question:

Nibbānaṃ pana, bhante, kimatthiyaṃ? "For what purpose is *Nibbāna*?" And the Buddha gives this answer: *Accasarā, Rādha, pañhaṃ, nāsakkhi pañhassa pariyantaṃ gahetuṃ. Nibbānogadhañhi, Rādha, brahmacariyaṃ vussati, nibbānaparāyanaṃ nibbānapariyosānaṃ.* "Rādha, you have gone beyond the scope of your questions, you are unable to grasp the limit of your questions. For, *Rādha*, the holy life is merged in *Nibbāna*, its consummation is *Nibbāna*, its culmination is *Nibbāna*."

This shows that the holy life gets merged in *Nibbāna*, just as rivers get merged in the sea. In other words, where the holy life is lived out to the full, *Nibbāna* is right there. That is why Venerable *Nanda*, who earnestly took up the holy life encouraged by the Buddha's promise of heavenly nymphs, attained *Arahant*-hood almost in spite of himself. At last he approached the Buddha and begged to relieve him of the onus of his promise. This shows that when one completes the training in the Holy Life, one is already in *Nibbāna*. Only when the training is incomplete, can one go to heaven.

Here, then, is a result which comes of its own accord. So there is no justification for a periphrastic usage like, "on reaching *Nibbāna*". No glimpse of a distant object is necessary. At whatever moment the Noble Eightfold Path is perfected, one attains *Nibbāna* then and there. Now, in the case of an examination, after answering the question paper, one has to wait for the results - to get a pass.

Here it is different. As soon as you have answered the paper correctly, you have passed immediately and the certificate is already there. This is the significance of the term *aññā* used in such contexts. *Aññā* stands for full certitude of the experience of *Nibbāna*.

The experience of the fruit of *Arahant*-ship gives him the final certificate of his attainment, *aññāphalo*.xxvi[43] That is why *Nibbāna* is called something to be realized. One gets the certitude that birth is extinct and that the holy life is lived out to the full, *khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ*.xxvii[44]

Of course there are some who still go on asking: what is the purpose of *Nibbāna*? And it is to answer this type of question that many scholars go on hair splitting. Normally in the world, whatever one does has some purpose or other. All occupations, all trades and businesses, are for gain and profit. Thieves and burglars also have some purpose in mind. But what is the purpose of trying to attain *Nibbāna*? What is the purpose of *Nibbāna*? Why should one attain *Nibbāna*?

It is to give an answer to this question that scholars brought in such phrases as *Nibbānaṃ pana āgamma*, 'on reaching *Nibbāna*'. They would say that 'on reaching *Nibbāna*', craving would be destroyed. On closer analysis it would appear that there is some fallacy in this question. For if there is any aim or purpose in attaining *Nibbāna*, *Nibbāna* would not be the ultimate aim. In other words, if *Nibbāna* is the ultimate aim, there should be no aim in attaining *Nibbāna*. Though it may well sound a tautology, one has to say that *Nibbāna* is the ultimate aim for the simple reason that there is no aim beyond it.

However, this might need more explanation. Now as far as craving is concerned, it has the nature of projection or inclination. It is something bent forward, with a forward view, and that is why it is called *bhavanetti*, the leader in becoming.xxviii[45] It leads one on and on in existence, like the carrot before the donkey. So that is why all objects presented by craving have some object or purpose as a projection. Craving is an inclination.

But what is the position if one makes the destruction of craving itself one's object? Now craving because of its inclining nature is always bent forward, so much so that

we get an infinite progression. This is for that, and that is for the other. As the phrase *taṇhā ponobhavikā* implies, craving brings up existence again and again.xxix[46]

But this is not the case when one makes the destruction of craving one's aim. When that aim is attained, there is nothing more to be done. So this brings us to the conclusion that the term *taṇhakkhayo*, destruction of craving, is a full-fledged synonym of *Nibbāna*.

Well, this much is enough for today. Time permitting and life permitting, I hope to continue with these sermons. I suppose the most Venerable Great Preceptor made this invitation with the idea of seeing one of his children at play. For good or for bad, I have taken up the invitation. Let the future of the *Sāsana* be the final judge of its merits.

Nibbana Sermons - Part 2

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.*xxx[1]

"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.

The second sermon on *Nibbāna* has come up for today. Towards the end of our sermon the other day we raised the point: Why is it improper to ask such questions as: 'What is the purpose of *Nibbāna*? Why should one attain *Nibbāna*?' xxxi[2] Our explanation was that since the holy life or the Noble Eightfold Path has *Nibbāna* as its ultimate aim, since it gets merged in *Nibbāna*, any questions as to the ultimate purpose of *Nibbāna* would be inappropriate.

In fact at some places in the canon we find the phrase *anuttara brahmacariyapariyosāna* used with reference to *Nibbāna*.xxxii[3] It means that *Nibbāna* is the supreme consummation of the holy life. The following standard phrase announcing a new *Arahant* is very often found in the *suttas*:

*Yassatthāya kulaputtā sammadeva agāasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajanti, tadanuttaraṃ brahmacariyapariyosānaṃ diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja vihāsi.*xxxiii[4] "In this very life he realized by his own higher knowledge and attained to that supreme consummation of the holy life for the purpose of which clansmen of good family rightly go forth from home to homelessness."

Now what is the justification for saying that one attains to *Nibbāna* by the very completion of the holy life? This Noble Eightfold Path is a straight path: *Ujuko nāma so maggo, abhayā nāma sā disā*.xxxiv[5] "This path is called the 'straight' and the direction it goes is called the 'fearless'." In the *Itivuttaka* we come across a verse which expresses this idea more vividly:

*Sekhassa sikkhamānassa,
ujumaggānusārino,
khayasmim paṭhamam nāṇam,
tato aññā anantarā*.xxxv[6]

"To the learner, learning

In pursuit of the straight path,

First comes the knowledge of destruction

And then immediately the certitude."

It is the fruit of *Arahant*-ship which gives him the certitude of the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

Here the word *anantarā* has been used. That concentration proper to the fruit of *Arahant*-ship is called *ānantarikā samādhi*.xxxvi[7] This means that the attainment of the fruit is immediate.

Though it may be so in the case of the *Arahant*, what about the stream-winner, the *sotāpanna*, one may ask. There is a general belief that in the case of a *sotāpanna* the vision of *Nibbāna* is like a glimpse of a distant lamp on a road with many bends and the *sotāpanna* has just negotiated the first bend.

But in accordance with the *Dhamma* it may be said that the norm of immediacy is applicable even to the knowledge of the first path. One who attains to the fruit of stream-winning may be a beggar, an illiterate person, or a seven year old child. It may be that he has heard the *Dhamma* for the first time. All the same, a long line of epithets is used with reference to him in the *suttas* as his qualifications: *Diṭṭhadhammo pattadhammo veditadhammo pariyoḅhadhammo tiṇṇavicikiccho viḅatakathamkatho vesārajjappatto aparappaccayo satthusāsane*.xxxvii[8]

Diṭṭhadhammo, he is one who has seen the *Dhamma*, the truth of *Nibbāna*. It is said in the *Ratanasutta* that along with the vision of the first path, three fetters are abandoned, namely *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, the self-hood view, *vicikicchā*, sceptical doubt, and *sīlabbataparāmāsa*, attachment to holy vows and ascetic practices.xxxxviii[9] Some might argue that only these fetters are abandoned at this stage, because it is a glimpse of *Nibbāna* from a distance. But then there is this second epithet, *pattadhammo*, which means that he has reached the *Dhamma*, that he has arrived at *Nibbāna*. Not only that, he is *veditadhammo*, he is one who has understood the *Dhamma*, which is

Nibbāna. He is *pariyogāḷhadhammo*, he has plunged into the *Dhamma*, he has dived into the *Dhamma*, which is *Nibbāna*. He is *tiṇṇavicikiccho*, he has crossed over doubts. *Vigatakathamkatho*, his waverings are gone. *Vesārajjappatto*, he has attained to proficiency. *Aparappaccayo satthusāsane*, in regard to the dispensation of the teacher he is not dependent on others. And that is to say that he could attain to *Nibbāna* even without another's help, though of course with the teacher's help he would attain it sooner.

So this string of epithets testifies to the efficacy of the realization by the first path. It is not a mere glimpse of *Nibbāna* from a distance. It is a reaching, an arrival or a plunge into *Nibbāna*. For purposes of illustration we may bring in a legend connected with the history of Sri Lanka. It is said that when King *Gajabāhu* invaded India, one of his soldiers, *Nīla*, who had Herculean strength, parted the seawater with a huge iron bar in order to make way for the king and the army. Now when the supramundane path arises in the mind the power of thought is as mighty as the blow of *Nīla* with his iron bar. Even with the first blow the sea-water parted, so that one could see the bottom. Similarly the sweeping influxes are parted for a moment when the transcendental path arises in a mind, enabling one to see the very bottom - *Nibbāna*. In other words, all preparations (*saṅkhāras*) are stilled for a moment, enabling one to see the cessation of preparations.

We have just given a simile by way of illustration, but incidentally there is a *Dhammapada* verse which comes closer to it:

Chinda sotaṃ parakkamma,

kāme panuda brāhmaṇa,

saṅkhārānaṃ khayam ṇatvā,

*akataññū'si brāhmaṇa.*xxxix[10]

"Strive forth and cut off the stream,

Discard, oh Brahmin, sense-desires,

Having known the destruction of preparations, oh Brahmin,

Become a knower of the un-made."

So this verse clearly indicates what the knowledge of the path does when it arises. Just as one leaps forward and cuts off a stream of water, so it cuts off, even for a moment, the preparations connected with craving. Thereby one realizes the destruction of preparations - *saṅkhārānaṃ khayam ṇatvā*.

Like the sea water parted by the blow of the iron bar, preparations part for a moment to reveal the very bottom which is 'unprepared', the *asaṅkhata*. *Akata*, or the un-made, is the same as *asaṅkhata*, the unprepared. So one has had a momentary vision of the sea bottom, which is free from preparations. Of course, after that

experience, influxes flow in again. But one kind of influxes, namely *ditṭhāsavā*, influxes of views, are gone for good and will never flow in again.

Now how was it that some with keen wisdom like *Bāhiya* attained *Arahant*-ship even while listening to a short sermon from the Buddha? They had dealt four powerful blows in quick succession with the iron bar of the path-knowledge to clear away all possible influxes.

What is called *akata* or *asaṅkhata*, the un-made or the un-prepared, is not something out there in a distance, as an object of thought. It is not a sign to be grasped by one who wants to attain *Nibbāna*.

Language encourages us to think in terms of signs. Very often we find it difficult to get rid of this habit. The worldlings with their defilements have to communicate with each other and the structure of the language has to answer their needs. So the subject-object relationship has become a very significant feature in a language. It always carries the implication that there is a thing to be grasped and that there is someone who grasps, that there is a doer and a thing done. So it is almost impossible to avoid such usages as: 'I want to see *Nibbāna*, I want to attain *Nibbāna*'. We are made to think in terms of getting and attaining.

However sometimes the Buddha reminds us that this is only a conventional usage and that these worldly usages are not to be taken too seriously. We come across such an instance in the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* where the Buddha retorts to some questions put by a certain deity.^{xl[11]} The deity named *Kakudha* asks the Buddha: "Do you rejoice, oh recluse?" And the Buddha retorts: "On getting what, friend?" Then the deity asks: "Then, recluse, do you grieve?" And the Buddha quips back: "On losing what, friend?" So the deity concludes: "Well then, recluse, you neither rejoice nor grieve!" And the Buddha replies: "That is so, friend."

It seems, then, that though we say we 'attain' *Nibbāna* there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose. If anything - **what is lost is an ignorance that there is something, and a craving that there is not enough** - and that is all one loses.

Now there are quite a number of synonyms for *Nibbāna*, such as *akata* and *asaṅkhata*. As already mentioned, there is even a list of thirty-three such epithets, out of which one is *dīpa*.^{xli[12]} Now *dīpa* means an island. When we are told that *Nibbāna* is an island, we tend to imagine some sort of existence in a beautiful island. But in the *Pārāyanavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta* the Buddha gives a good corrective to that kind of imagining in his reply to a question put by the Brahmin youth *Kappa*, a pupil of *Bāvarī*. *Kappa* puts his question in the following impressive verse:

Majjhe sarasmiṃ tiṭṭhataṃ,

oghe jāte mahabbhaye,

jarāmaccuparetānaṃ,

dīpaṃ pabrūhi mārīsa,

tvañca me dīpaṃ akkhāhi,
yathayidaṃ nāparaṃ siyā.xlii[13]

"Unto 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 non else excels,
Yea, such an isle, pray tell me sire."

And the Buddha gives his answer in two inspiring verses:

Majjhe sarasmim̐ tiṭṭhataṃ,
oghe jāte mahabbhaye,
jarāmaccuparetānaṃ,
dīpaṃ pabrūmi Kappa te.

Akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ,
etaṃ dīpaṃ anāparaṃ,
nibbānaṃ iti naṃ brūmi,
jarāmaccuparikkhayaṃ.

"Unto them that stand midstream,
When the frightful floods flow forth,
To them in decay-and-death forlorn,
An island, *Kappa*, I shall proclaim.

Owning naught, grasping naught,
The isle is this, none else besides.
Nibbāna, that is how I call that isle,
Wherein is decay decayed and death is dead."

Akiñcanaṃ means ‘owning nothing’, *anādānaṃ* means ‘grasping nothing’. *Etaṃ dīpaṃ anāparaṃ*, this is the island, nothing else. *Nibbānaṃ iti naṃ brūmi, jarāmaccuparikkhayaṃ*, "and that I call *Nibbāna*, which is the extinction of decay-and-death."

From this also we can infer that words like *akata*, *asañkhata* and *sabba-sañkhārā-samatha* are full fledged synonyms of *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is not some mysterious state quite apart from them. It is not something to be projected into a distance.

Some are in the habit of getting down to a discussion on *Nibbāna* by putting *sañkhata* on one side and *asañkhata* on the other side. They start by saying that *sañkhata*, or the ‘prepared’, is *anicca*, or impermanent. If *sañkhata* is *anicca*, they conclude that *asañkhata* must be *nicca*, that is the unprepared must be permanent. Following the same line of argument they argue that since *sañkhata* is *dukkha*, *asañkhata* must be *sukha*. But when they come to the third step, they get into difficulties. If *sañkhata* is *anattā*, or not-self, then surely *asañkhata* must be *attā*, or self. At this point they have to admit that their argument is too facile and so they end up by saying that after all *Nibbāna* is something to be realized.

All this confusion arises due to a lack of understanding of the law of Dependent Arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*. Therefore, first of all, we have to say something about the doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda*.

According to the *Ariyapariyesanasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha, soon after his enlightenment, reflected on the profundity of the *Dhamma* and was rather disinclined to preach it. He saw two points in the doctrine that are difficult for the world to see or grasp. One was *paṭicca samuppāda*:

Duddasaṃ idaṃ thānaṃ yadidaṃ idappaccayatā paṭiccasamuppādo.xliv[14] "Hard to see is this point, namely dependent arising which is a relatedness of this to that." And the second point was *Nibbāna: Idampi kho thānaṃ duddasaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasañkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo tañhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ*. "And this point, too, is difficult to see, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction."

From this context we can gather that if there is any term we can use to define *paṭicca samuppāda*, a term that comes closer to it in meaning, it is *idappaccayatā*. The Buddha himself has described *paṭicca samuppāda* in this context as a relatedness of this to that, *idappaccayatā*. As a matter of fact the basic principle which forms the noble norm of this doctrine of dependent arising is this *idappaccayatā*. Let us now try to get at its meaning by examining the doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda*.

In quite a number of contexts, such as the *Bahudhātukasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Bodhivagga* of the *Udāna* the law of *paṭicca samuppāda* is set out in the following manner:

Iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti,

imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati

imasmim asati idam na hoti,

imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati -

*yadidaṃ avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ, saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparideva-
dukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.*

*Avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatana-
nirodho, saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho, taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ soka-
paridevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhan-
dhassa nirodho hoti.xliv[15]*

"Thus: -This being - this comes to be

With the arising of this - this arises

This not being - this does not come to be

With the cessation of this - this ceases.

- and that is to say, dependent on ignorance, preparations come to be; dependent on preparations, consciousness; dependent on consciousness, name-and-form; dependent on name-and-form, the six sense-bases; dependent on the six sense-bases, contact; dependent on contact, feeling; dependent on feeling, craving; dependent on craving, grasping; dependent on grasping, becoming; dependent on becoming, birth; dependent on birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Thus is the arising of this entire mass of suffering.

But with the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance, comes the cessation of preparations; with the cessation of preparations, the cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of name-and-form; with the cessation of name-and-form, the cessation of the six sense-bases; with the cessation of the six sense-bases, the cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, the cessation of grasping; with the cessation of grasping, the cessation of becoming; with the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, the cessation of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease to be. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering."

This is the thematic statement of the law of *paṭicca samuppāda*. It is set out here in the form of a fundamental principle. *Imasmim sati idam hoti*, "this being, this comes to be." *Imassuppādā idam uppajjati*, "with the arising of this, this arises." *Imasmim asati idam na hoti*, "this not being, this does not come to be". *Imassa nirodhā idam*

nirujjhati, "with the cessation of this, this ceases." It resembles an algebraical formula.

And then we have the conjunctive *yadidaṃ*, which means "namely this" or "that is to say". This shows that the foregoing statement is axiomatic and implies that what follows is an illustration. So the twelve linked formula beginning with the words *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā* is that illustration. No doubt the twelve-linked formula is impressive enough. But the important thing here is the basic principle involved, and that is the fourfold statement beginning with *imasmiṃ sati*.

This fact is very clearly brought out in a certain *sutta* in the *Nidānavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. There the Buddha addresses the monks and says:

*Paṭiccasamuppādaṅca vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi paṭiccasamuppanne ca dhamme.*xlvi[16] "Monks, I will teach you dependent arising and things that are dependently arisen."

In this particular context the Buddha makes a distinction between dependent arising and things that are dependently arisen. In order to explain what is meant by dependent arising, or *paṭicca samuppāda*, he takes up the last two links in the formula, in the words: *jātipaccayā, bhikkhave, jarāmaṇaṃ*, "monks, dependent on birth is decay-and-death." Then he draws attention to the importance of the basic principle involved: *Uppādā vā Tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā Tathāgatānaṃ, ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā* (etc.). Out of the long exhortation given there, this is the part relevant to us here.

Jātipaccayā, bhikkhave, jarāmaṇaṃ, "dependent on birth, oh monks, is decay-and-death", and that is to say that decay-and-death has birth as its condition. *Uppādā vā Tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā Tathāgatānaṃ*, "whether there be an arising of the *Tathāgatās* or whether there be no such arising". *ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā*, "that elementary nature, that orderliness of the *Dhamma*, that norm of the *Dhamma*, the relatedness of this to that does stand as it is."

So from this it is clear that the underlying principle could be understood even with the help of a couple of links. But the commentary seems to have ignored this fact in its definition of the term *idappaccayatā*. It says: *Imesaṃ jarāmaṇādīnaṃ paccayā idappaccayā, idappaccayāva idappaccayatā.*xlvi[17] The word *imesaṃ* is in the plural and this indicates that the commentator has taken the dependence in a collective sense. But it is because of the fact that even two links are sufficient to illustrate the law, that the Buddha follows it up with the declaration that this is the *paṭicca samuppāda*. And then he goes on to explain what is meant by 'things dependently arisen':

Katame ca, bhikkhave, paṭiccasamuppannā dhammā? Jarāmaṇaṃ, bhikkhave, aniccaṃ saṅkhataṃ paṭiccasamuppannaṃ khayadhammaṃ vayadhammaṃ virāgadhammaṃ nirodhadhammaṃ. "What, monks, are things dependently arisen?" And then, taking up just one of the last links, he declares: "decay-and-death, monks, is impermanent, prepared, dependently arisen, of a nature to get destroyed, to pass away, fade away and cease."

By the way, the word *virāga* usually means detachment or dispassion. But in such contexts as *avijjāvirāgā* and *pītiyā ca virāgā* one has to render it by words like ‘fading away’. So that *avijjāvirāga* could be rendered as: ‘by the fading away of ignorance’, and *pītiyā virāgā* would mean ‘by the fading away of joy’.

It seems, then, that decay-and-death themselves are impermanent, that they are prepared or made up, that they are dependently arisen. Decay-and-death themselves can get destroyed and pass away. Decay as well as death can fade away and cease.

Then the Buddha takes up the preceding link *jāti*, or birth. And that too is given the same qualifications. In the same manner he takes up each of the preceding links up to and including ignorance, *avijjā*, and applies to them the above qualifications. It is significant that every one of the twelve links, even ignorance, is said to be dependently arisen.

Let us try to understand how, for instance, decay-and-death themselves can get destroyed or pass away. Taking the *idappaccayatā* formula as a paradigm, we can illustrate the relationship between the two links birth and decay-and-death. Instead of saying: this being, that comes to be (and so forth), now we have to say: birth being, decay-and-death comes to be. With the arising of birth, decay-and-death arises. Birth not being, decay-and-death does not come to be. With the cessation of birth, decay-and-death ceases.

Now birth itself is an arising. But here we can’t help saying that birth ‘arises’. It is like saying that birth is born. How can birth get born? Similarly death is a passing away. But here we have to say that death itself ‘passes away’. How can death pass away? Perhaps, as we proceed, we might get the answers to these questions.

Now at this point let us take up for discussion a certain significant passage in the *MahāNidānasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In the course of an exposition of the law of *paṭicca samuppāda*, addressed to Venerable *Ānanda*, the Buddha makes the following statement:

*Ettāvatā kho, Ānanda, jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā upapajjetha vā. Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho, ettāvatā paññattipatho, ettāvatā paññāvacaraṃ, ettāvatā vaṭṭaṃ vattati itthattaṃ paññāpanāya yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ saha viññāṇena.*xlvii[18] "In so far only, *Ānanda*, can one be born, or grow old, or die, or pass away, or reappear, in so far only is there any pathway for verbal expression, in so far only is there any pathway for terminology, in so far only is there any pathway for designation, in so far only is the range of wisdom, in so far only is the round kept going for there to be a designation as the this-ness, that is to say: name-and-form together with consciousness."

We have rendered the term *itthatta* by ‘this-ness’, and what it means will become clear as we go on. In the above quotation the word *ettāvatā*, which means ‘in so far only’, has as its point of reference the concluding phrase *yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ saha viññāṇena*, "that is to say: name-and-form together with consciousness". So the statement, as it is, expresses a complete idea. But some editions have an additional phrase: *aññamaññapaccayatā pavattati*, "exists in a mutual relationship". This phrase is obviously superfluous and is probably a commentarial addition.

What is meant by the Buddha's statement is that name-and-form together with consciousness is the rallying point for all concepts of birth, decay, death and rebirth. All pathways for verbal expression, terminology and designation converge on name-and-form together with consciousness. The range of wisdom extends only up to the relationship between these two. And it is between these two that there is a whirling round so that one may point out a this-ness. In short, the secret of the entire *saṃsāric* existence is to be found in this whirlpool.

Vaṭṭa and *āvattā* are words used for a whirlpool. We shall be bringing up quotations in support of that meaning. It seems, however, that this meaning has got obscured in the course of time. In the commentaries and in some modern translations there is quite a lot of confusion with regard to the meaning of the phrase *vattam vattati*. In fact one Sinhala translation renders it as 'saṃsāric rain'. What rain has to do with *saṃsāra* is a matter for conjecture. What is actually meant by *vattam vattati* is a whirling round, and *saṃsāra*, even literally, is that. Here we are told that there is a whirling round between name-and-form and consciousness, and this is the *saṃsāric* whirlpool to which all the aforesaid things are traceable.

Already in the first sermon we tried to show that name in name-and-form has to do with names and concepts.xlviii[19] Now from this context it becomes clear that all pathways for verbal expression, terminology and designation converge on this whirlpool between name-and-form and consciousness.

Now that we have attached so much significance to a whirlpool, let us try to understand how a whirlpool is formed. Let us try to get at the natural laws underlying its formation. How does a whirlpool come to be?

Suppose a river is flowing downward. To flow downward is in the nature of a river. But a certain current of water thinks: "I can and must move upstream." And so it pushes on against the main stream. But at a certain point its progress is checked by the main stream and is thrust aside, only to come round and make a fresh attempt, again and again. All these obstinate and unsuccessful attempts gradually lead to a whirling round. As time goes on, the run-away current understands, as it were, that it cannot move forward. But it does not give up. It finds an alternative aim in moving towards the bottom. So it spirals downward, funnel-like, digging deeper and deeper towards the bottom, until an abyss is formed. Here then we have a whirlpool.

While all this is going on, there is a crying need to fill up the chasm, and the whirlpool develops the necessary force of attraction to cater to it. It attracts and grasps everything that comes within its reach and sends it whirling down, funnel like, into the chasm. The whirling goes on at a tremendous speed, while the circumference grows larger and larger. At last the whirlpool becomes a centre of a tremendous amount of activity.

While this kind of activity is going on in a river or a sea, there is a possibility for us to point it out as 'that place' or 'this place'. Why? Because there is an activity going on. Usually, in the world, the place where an activity is going on is known as a 'unit', a 'centre', or an 'institution'. Since the whirlpool is also a centre of activity, we may designate it as a 'here' or 'there'. We may even personify it. With reference to it, we can open up pathways for verbal expression, terminology and designation.

But if we are to consider the form of activity that is going on here, what is it after all? It is only a perversion. That obstinate current thought to itself, out of delusion and ignorance: I can and must move upstream. And so it tried and failed, but turned round only to make the same vain attempt again and again. Ironically enough, even its **progress** towards the bottom is a **stagnation**.

So here we have ignorance on one side and craving on the other, as a result of the abyss formed by the whirlpool. In order to satisfy this craving there is that power of attraction: grasping. Where there is **grasping**, there is **existence**, or *bhava*. The entire whirlpool now appears as a centre of activity.

Now the basic principle underlying this whirlpool is to be found in our bodies. What we call 'breathing' is a continuous process of emptying and filling up. So even the so-called 'life-principle' is not much different from the activity of a whirlpool. The functioning of the lungs and the heart is based on the same principle and the blood circulation is in fact a whirling round. This kind of activity is very often known as 'automatic', a word which has connotations of **self-sufficiency**. But at the root of it there is a perversion, as we saw in the case of the whirlpool. All these activities are based on a conflict between two opposite forces.

In fact existence in its entirety is not much different from the conflict of that obstinate current of water with the main stream. This characteristic of conflict is so pervasive that it can be seen even in the basic laws governing the existence of a society. In our social life, rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. We can enjoy certain privileges, provided we fulfil our duties. So here too we have a tangle within and a tangle without.xlix[20]

Now this is about the existence of the society as such. And what about the field of economics? There too the basic principles show the same weakness. Production is governed by laws of supply and demand. There will be a supply so long as there is a demand. Between them there is a conflict. It leads to many complications. The price mechanism is on a precarious balance and that is why some wealthy countries are forced to the ridiculous position of dumping their surplus into the sea.

All this shows that existence is basically in a precarious position. To illustrate this, let us take the case of two snakes of the same size, trying to swallow up each other. Each of them tries to swallow up the other from the tail upwards and when they are half way through the meal, what do we find? A **snake cycle**. This snake cycle goes round and round, trying to swallow up each other. But will it ever be successful?

The precarious position illustrated by the snake cycle, we find in our own bodies in the form of respiration, blood circulation and so forth. What appears as the stability in the society and in the economy, is similarly precarious. It is because of this conflict, this unsatisfactoriness, that the Buddha concluded that the whole of existence is suffering.

When the arising aspect is taken too seriously, to the neglect of the cessation aspect, instead of a conflict or an unsatisfactoriness one tends to see something automatic everywhere. This body as well as machines such as water pumps and electrical appliances seem to work on an automatic principle. But in truth there is only

a conflict between two opposing forces. When one comes to think of it, there is no ‘**auto**’-ness even in the automatic.

All that is there, is a bearing up with difficulty. And this in fact is the meaning of the word *dukkha*. *Duḥ* stands for ‘difficulty’ and *kha* for ‘bearing up’. **Even with difficulty one bears it up, and though one bears it up, it is difficult.**

Now regarding the question of existence we happened to mention that because of a whirlpool’s activity, one can point out a ‘**here**’ with reference to it. We can now come back to the word *itthattaṃ*, which we left out without comment in the quotation *et-tāvātā vaṭṭaṃ vattati itthattaṃ paññāpanāya*, "in so far only does the whirlpool whirl for the designation of an *itthatta*." Now what is this *itthatta*? *Ittha* means ‘this’, so *itthattaṃ* would mean ‘this-ness’. The whirling of a whirlpool qualifies itself for a designation as a ‘this’.

There are a couple of verses in the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* which bring out the meaning of this word more clearly:

Jāti maraṇa saṃsāraṃ,

ye vajanti punappunaṃ,

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ,

avijjāyeva sā gati.[21]

Taṇhā dutiyo puriso,

dīgham addhāna saṃsāraṃ,

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ,

*saṃsāraṃ nātivattati.*li[22]

Ye jāti maraṇa saṃsāraṃ punappunaṃ vajanti, "they that go on again and again the round of birth and death". *Itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ* "which is a this-ness and an otherwise-ness", or "which is an alternation between a this-ness and an otherwise-ness". *Sā gati avijjāya eva*, "that going of them, that faring of them, is only a journey of ignorance." *Taṇhā dutiyo puriso*, "the man with craving as his second" (or his companion). *Dīgham addhāna saṃsāraṃ*, "faring on for a long time in *saṃsāra*". *Itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ, saṃsāraṃ nātivattati*, "does not get away from the round which is a this-ness and an otherwise-ness", or "which is an alternation between a this-ness and an otherwise-ness". What is meant by it, is the transcendence of *saṃsāra*.

We saw above how the concept of a ‘here’ arose with the birth of a whirlpool. In fact one’s birth is at the same time the birth of a ‘here’ or ‘this place’. And that is what is meant by *itthabhāva* in the two verses quoted above. *Itthabhāva* and *itthatta* both mean ‘this-ness’. In both verses this ‘this-ness’ is coupled with an otherwise-ness, *aññathābhāva*. Here too we see a conflict between two things, this-ness and

otherwise-ness. The cycle of *saṃsāra*, represented by birth and death, *jāti maraṇa saṃsāraṃ*, is equivalent to an alternation between this-ness and otherwise-ness, *itthabhāvaññathābhāva*. And as the first verse says, this recurrent alternation between this-ness and otherwise-ness is nothing but a journey of ignorance itself.

Though we have given so much significance to the two terms *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*, the commentary to the *Sutta Nipāta* treats them lightly. It explains *itthabhāvaṃ* as *imaṃ manussabhāvaṃ*, which means "this state as a human being", and *aññathābhāvaṃ* as *ito avasesa aññanikāyabhāvaṃ*, "any state of being other than this".lii[23] This explanation misses the deeper significance of the word *itthatta*.

In support of this we may refer to the *Pāṭikasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. There we are told that when the world system gets destroyed at the end of an aeon, some being or other gets reborn in an empty Brahma mansion, and after being there for a long time, thinks, out of a feeling of loneliness: *Aho vata aññepi sattā itthattaṃ āgaccheyyūṃ*.liii[24] "How nice it would be if other beings also come to this state". In this context the word *itthatta* refers to the Brahma world and not the human world. From the point of view of the Brahmas, *itthatta* refers to the Brahma world and only for us here, it means the human world.

However this is just a narrow meaning of the word *itthatta*. When the reference is to the entire round of existence or *saṃsāra*, *itthatta* does not necessarily mean 'this human world'. The two terms have a generic sense, because they represent some basic principle. As in the case of a whirlpool, this-ness is to be seen together with an otherwise-ness. This illustrates the conflict characteristic of existence. Wherever a this-ness arises, a possibility for an otherwise-ness comes in. *Itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva* go together.

Aniccatā, or impermanence, is very often explained with the help of the phrase *vipariṇāmaññathābhāva*.liv[25] Now here too we have the word *aññathābhāva*. Here the word preceding it, gives a clue to its true significance. *Vipariṇāma* is quite suggestive of a process of evolution. Strictly speaking, *pariṇāma* is evolution, and *pariṇata* is the fully evolved or mature stage. The prefix *vi* stands for the anti-climax. The evolution is over, now it is becoming other. Ironically enough, this state of 'becoming-other' is known as otherwise-ness, *aññathābhāva*. And so this twin, *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*, tell us the nature of the world. Between them, they explain for us the law of impermanence.

In the Section-of-the-Threes in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the three characteristics of a *saṅkhata* are explained in this order: *Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati*.lv[26] "an arising is manifest, a passing away is manifest and an otherwise-ness in the persisting is manifest."

This implies that the persistence is only apparent and that is why it is mentioned last. There is an otherwise-ness even in this apparently persistent. But later scholars preferred to speak of three stages as *uppāda, ṭhiti, bhaṅga*.lvi[27] "arising, persistence and breaking up". However the law of impermanence could be sufficiently understood even with the help of two words, *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*, this-ness and otherwise-ness. Very often we find the Buddha summing up the law of impermanence in the two words *samudaya* and *vaya*, "arising" and "passing away".lvii[28]

There is an apparent contradiction in the phrase *ṭhitassa aññathatta*, but it reminds us of the fact that what the world takes as static or persisting is actually not so. The so-called 'static' is from beginning to end an otherwise-ness. Now if we are to relate this to the two links *jāti* and *jarāmarañam* in *paṭicca samuppāda*, we may say that as soon as one is born the process of otherwise-ness sets in. Wherever there is birth, there is death. One of the traditional *Pāli* verses on the reflections on death has the following meaningful lines:

Uppattiyā sahevedaṃ, marañam āgataṃ sadā,[lviii[29] "always death has come, even with the birth itself." Just as in a conjoined pair, when one is drawn the other follows, even so when birth is drawn in, decay-and-death follow as a matter of course.

Before the advent of the Buddha, the world believed in the possibility of a birth devoid of decay-and-death. It believed in a form of existence devoid of grasping. Because of its ignorance of the pair-wise relatedness of this-to-that, *idappaccayatā*, it went on with its deluded search. And that was the reason for all the conflict in the world.

According to the teaching of the Buddha, the concept of birth is equivalent to the concept of a 'here'. As a matter of fact, this birth of a 'here' is like the first peg driven for the measurement of a world. Because of the pair-wise relationship, the very first '**birthday-present**' that one gets as soon as one is born, is - **death**. The inevitable death that he is entitled to. This way we can understand the deeper significance of the two words *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*, this-ness and otherwise-ness.

We have to say the same thing with regard to the whirlpool. Apparently it has the power to control, to hold sway. Seen from a distance, the whirlpool is a centre of activity with some controlling power. Now, one of the basic meanings of the concept of self is the ability to control, to hold sway. And a whirlpool too, as seen from a distance, seems to have this ability. Just as it appears automatic, so also it seems to have some power to control.

But on deeper analysis it reveals its **not-self** nature. What we have here is simply the conflict between the main stream and a run-away current. It is the outcome of the conflict between two forces and not the work of just one force. It is a case of relatedness of this-to-that, *idappaccayatā*. As one verse in the *Bālavagga* of the *Dhammapada* puts it:

Attā hi attano natthi,[lix[30] "even oneself is not one's own."

So even a whirlpool is not its own, there is nothing really automatic about it. This then is the *dukkha*, the suffering, the conflict, the unsatisfactoriness. What the world holds on to as existence is just a process of otherwise-ness, as the Buddha vividly portrays for us in the following verses of the *Nandavagga* of the *Udāna*.

Ayaṃ loko santāpajāto, phassapareto

rogaṃ vadati attato,

yena yena hi maññati,

tato taṃ hoti aññathā.

Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko,

bhavapareto bhavam evābhinandati,

yad'abhinandati taṃ bhayaṃ,

yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ,

bhava vipphānāya kho panidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ vussati.lx[31]

"This anguished world, fully given to contact,

Speaks of a disease as self.

In whatever terms it conceives of,

Even thereby it turns otherwise.

The world, attached to becoming,

Given fully to becoming,

Though becoming otherwise,

Yet delights in becoming.

What it delights in is a fear

What it fears from

Is a suffering.

But then this holy life is lived for the abandoning of that very becoming."

Just a few lines - but how deep they go! The world is in anguish and is enslaved by contact. What it calls self is nothing but a disease. *Maññati* is a word of deeper significance. *Maññanā* is conceiving under the influence of craving, conceit and views. Whatever becomes an object of that conceiving, by that very conception it becomes otherwise. That is to say that an opportunity arises for an otherwise-ness, even as 'death' has come together with 'birth'.

So conceiving, or conception, is itself the reason for otherwise-ness. Before a '**thing**' becomes '**otherwise**', it has to become a '**thing**'. And it becomes a 'thing' only when attention is focussed on it under the influence of craving, conceit and views and it is separated from the whole world and grasped as a '**thing**'. And that is why it is said:

Yaṃ yañhi lokasmim upādiyanti,

teneva Māro anveti jantuṃ.lxi[32]

"Whatever one grasps in the world,

By that itself *Māra* pursues a being."

The world is attached to becoming and is fully given to becoming. Therefore its very nature is otherwise-ness, *aññathābhāvī*. And then the Buddha declares the inevitable outcome of this contradictory position: *yad abhinandati taṃ bhayaṃ*, whatever one delights in, that is a fear, that is a danger. What one delights in, is 'becoming' and that is a source of fear. And *yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ*, what one fears, or is afraid of, that is suffering. And of what is one afraid? One is afraid of the otherwise-ness of the thing that one holds on to as existing. So the otherwise-ness is the suffering and the thing grasped is a source of fear.

For instance, when one is walking through a town with one's pockets full of gems, one is afraid because of the valuables in one's pockets. Even so, the existence that one delights in is a source of fear. What one fears is change or otherwise-ness, and that is suffering. Therefore it is that this holy life is lived for the abandonment of that very becoming or existence.

So from this quotation it becomes clear that the nature of existence is 'otherwise-ness'. It is the insight into this nature that is basic in the understanding of *idappaccayatā*. What is known as the arising of the *Dhamma*-eye is the understanding of this predicament in worldly existence. But that *Dhamma*-eye arises together with a solution for this predicament:

Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ.lxii[33] "Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease".

As far as the arising aspect is concerned, this whirlpool is formed due to the grasping through craving, conceit and views. Once this *saṃsāric* whirlpool is formed, it keeps on attracting all that is in the world, all that is within its reach, in the form of craving and grasping. But there is a cessation to this process. It is possible to make it cease. Why? Because it is something arisen due to causes and conditions. Because it is a process based on two things, without a self to hold sway. That is why we have mentioned at the very outset that everything is impermanent, prepared and dependently arisen, *aniccaṃ, saṅkhatam, paṭicca samuppannaṃ*.

Everyone of the twelve links in the formula, including ignorance, is dependently arisen. They are all arisen due to causes and conditions, they are not permanent, *aniccaṃ*. They are only made up or prepared, *saṅkhatam*. The word *saṅkhatam* is explained in various ways. But in short it means something that is made up, prepared, or concocted by way of intention. *Paṭicca samuppannaṃ* means conditionally arisen and therefore it is of a nature to get destroyed, *khayadhamma*. It is of a nature to pass away, *vayadhamma*. It is of a nature to fade away, *virāgadhamma*. It is of a nature to cease, *nirodhadhamma*.

It seems that even the colour or shade of decay-and-death can fade away and that is why we have pointed out their relevance to the question of concepts. This nature of

fading away is understood by one who has had an insight into the law of arising and cessation.

Samsāra is a whirlpool as far as the ordinary beings caught up in it are concerned. Now what about the *Arahants*? How is the idea of this whirlpool presented in the case of the *Arahants*? It is simply said that for them there is no whirling round for there to be a designation: *vaṭṭaṃ tesam natthi paññāpanāya*.lxiii[34] So in their case, there is no whirling round to justify a designation.

This, then, is something deeper than the whirlpool itself. The whirlpool can be pointed out because of its activity. But not so easily the emancipated ones and that is why there is so much controversy regarding the nature of the *Tathāgatha*. The image of the whirlpool in its relation to the emancipated ones is beautifully presented in the following verse from the *Cūlavagga* of the *Udāna*:

Acchecchi vaṭṭaṃ byagā nirāsaṃ,

visukkhā saritā na sandati,

chinnaṃ vaṭṭaṃ na vattati,

es' ev' anto dukkhassa.lxiv[35]

"He has cut off the whirlpool

And reached desirelessness,

The stream dried up now no longer flows.

The whirlpool cut off whirls no more.

This, even this, is suffering's end."

What has the *Arahant* done? He has cut off the whirlpool. He has breached it and has reached the desireless state. The stream of craving is dried up and flows no more. The whirlpool cut off at the root no more whirls. And this is the end of suffering. The cutting off of the whirlpool is the realization of cessation, which is *Arahant*-hood.

It is because of the accent on the arising aspect that the current tries to move against the main stream. When that attempt is given up, the rest happens as a matter of course. This idea is even more clearly brought out by the following two verses in the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. They are in the form of a dialogue between a deity and the Buddha. The deity asks:

Kuto sarā nivattanti,

kattha vaṭṭaṃ na vattati,

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

*asesaṃ uparujjhati?*lxv[36]

"From where do currents turn back,
Where whirls no more the whirlpool,
Where is it that name-and-form
Is held in check in a way complete?"

The Buddha gives the answer in the following verse:

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

"Where earth and water, fire and wind no footing find,
From there it is that currents turn back.
There the whirlpool whirls no more
And there it is that name-and-form
Is held in check in a way complete."

The reference here is to *Nibbāna*. Whether it is called *sabbasaṅkhārasamatha*, the stilling of all preparations, or *asaṅkhatadhātu*, the unprepared element, it means the state of cessation. And when the *Arahant's* mind is in that state, the four elements, which are like ghosts, do not haunt him. They do not get a 'footing' in that consciousness. When they fade away, due to detachment, those currents do not flow and the whirlpool whirls no more. Name and form are fully held in check there.

Now as far as the meaning of *rūpa* in *nāma-rūpa* in this reference is concerned, its definition as *cattāri ca mahābhūtāni, catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ* is quite significant .lxvi[37] It draws attention to the fact that the four great primaries underlie the concept of form. This is something unique, since before the advent of the Buddha the world thought that in order to get away from *rūpa* one has to grasp *arūpa*. But the irony of the situation is that, even in *arūpa*, *rūpa* is implicit in a subtle form. Or in other words, *arūpa* takes *rūpa* for granted.

Supposing someone, walking in the darkness of the night, has a hallucination of a devil and runs away to escape from it. He thinks he is running away from the devil, but he is taking the devil with him. The devil is in his mind, it is something imagined. Similarly, until the Buddha came into the scene, the worldlings grasped *arūpa* in order to get away from *rūpa*. But because of the dichotomy between *rūpa* and *arūpa*, even when they swung as far as the highest formless realms, they were still in bondage to *saṅkhāras*, or preparations. As soon as the momentum of their swing of *saṅkhāras* got fully spent, they swung back to *rūpa*. So here too we see the question of duality and dichotomy.

This sermon has served its purpose if it has drawn attention to the importance of the questions of duality, dichotomy and the relatedness of this to that, *idappaccayatā*. So this is enough for today.

Nibbana Sermons - Part 3

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

*Etaṃ santam, etaṃ paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam.*lxvii[1]

"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.

Today we have before us the third sermon on *Nibbāna*. The other day, with the help of the simile of a whirlpool, we attempted an explanation of the terms *saṃsāra* on the one hand, and *Nibbāna* on the other, that is to say 'going round', or *saṃsāraṇa*, and 'going out', or *nissaraṇa*.lxviii[2] We also cited *suttas* to illustrate both the arising (*samudaya*) and cessation (*nirodha*) aspects of the law of dependent arising.

As regards this whirlpool, to show a parallel development with the links of the law of dependent arising, by way of a sustained simile, we may say that the ignorance in presuming that it is possible to go against the main stream of the three signata - impermanence, suffering and not-self - is the place of its origin. That heap of preparations impelled by ignorance, which takes the current forward, may be regarded as *saṅkhāras*. And where the current in its progress clashes with the main stream to become a whirlpool, that pushing forward against the main stream is *viññāṇa* or consciousness.

The outcome of the clash is *nāma-rūpa*, or name-and-form, with its formal name and nominal form. That link in the formula of dependent arising called *saḷāyatana*, or six sense-bases, could be regarded as the outgrowth of this name-and-form. We can understand that link, too, in relation to the simile of the whirlpool. As the whirlpool

goes on for a long time, an abyss is formed, the functioning of which could be compared to the six sense-bases.

As a matter of fact, bodily pains are comparable to an abyss. In a certain *sutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* the Buddha says:

*Sārīrikānaṃ kho etaṃ bhikkhave dukkhānaṃ vedanānaṃ adhivacanaṃ, yadidaṃ pātālo'ti.*lxix[3] "Monks, abyss is a synonym for painful bodily feelings."

When one comes to think about that statement, it would appear that the thirst of craving arises in beings in various forms of existence because of painful feeling. The *Sallattenasutta* adds to this by stating that the uninstructed worldling, on being touched by painful feeling, delights in sense pleasures, because he knows no way out of painful feeling other than the sense pleasures.lxx[4]

In the light of that statement it seems that the abyss is the endless barrage of painful feelings. The force of attraction that arises from the abyss is like the thirst to quell those painful feelings. The grasping that follows is the functioning of the same force of attraction. It attracts all the flotsam and jetsam around it, as things organically appropriated, *upādinna*, to put up a show of existence, or *bhava*. That is, a spot that can be pointed out with the help of things thus grasped by the whirlpool. So this whirlpool or vortex simile gives us some idea of the law of dependent arising.

The insight into the basic principle of dependent arising, is in fact regarded as the arising of the 'eye of *Dhamma*'. About the stream-winner it is said that the dustless stainless eye of *Dhamma* has arisen in him. The following phrase, which sums up the significance of that *Dhamma*-eye, comes up quite often in the discourses:

*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ.*lxxi[5] "Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease."

Sometimes it is briefly alluded to with the couple of terms *samudaya* and *nirodha*, as *samudayo samudayo* and *nirodho nirodho*.lxxii[6] It is as if the experience of that insight has found expression as an exclamation: "Arising, arising! Ceasing, ceasing!" The above phrase only connects up the two aspects of that experience.

It seems then that what is called the 'Dhamma-eye', is the ability to see the *Nibbānic* solution in the very vortex of the *samsāric* problem. That way of analysis which puts *samsāra* and *Nibbāna* far apart, into two watertight compartments, as it were, gives rise to interminable problems. But here we see that, just as much as one could realize *Nibbāna* by discovering the cause of suffering and following the path to its cessation, which in effect is the understanding of the four noble truths, one could also put an end to this vortex by understanding its cause and applying the correct means for its cessation.

In the previous sermon we happened to quote some Canonical verses, which declared that the vortex does not exist for an *arahant*.lxxiii[7] Now as regards the condition after the cessation of the vortex, if someone asks where the vortex or the whirlpool has gone, what sort of answer can we give? It is the same difficulty that comes up in answering the question: "Where has the fire gone after it has gone out?"

Because here too, what we call the whirlpool is that current of water which went against the main stream. It also consists of water, like the body of water outside it. So we cannot say that they united, nor can we say that it went and hid somewhere.

Here we find ourselves in a queer situation. All we can say in fairness to truth is that there had been a certain form of activity, a certain state of unrest, due to certain causes and conditions. Because of that activity that was going on there, it was possible to designate it, to give it a name. By worldly convention one could refer to it as "that place" or "this place".

The entire field of activity was called a whirlpool by worldly convention. But now, the so-called whirlpool is no more. The worldly convention is no more applicable as in the case of an extinguished fire. The word "fire" was introduced, the concept of "fire" was created, to designate a certain state of affairs that arose due to causes and conditions, due to graspings. So from this also we can see that it is in concepts that ignorance finds a camouflage.

Being unaware of it the world goes on amassing concepts and even expects to see them in *Nibbāna*. There are some who fondly hope to get a vision of their lists of concepts when they realize *Nibbāna*. But that wisdom penetrates through even the concepts and that is why it is called *udayatthagāminī paññā ariyā nibbedhikā*,^[8] "the *ariyan* penetrative wisdom that sees the rise and fall".

The idea of penetration is already implicit in the phrase *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*, "whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease". If anything has the nature to arise, by that very nature it is bound to come to its end. And that is why the wandering ascetic *Upatissa*, who was to become Venerable *Sāriputta* later, attained the fruit of a stream-winner even on hearing the first two lines of the verse uttered by Venerable *Assaji*:

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā, tesam hetuṃ tathāgato āha.^[9] "Of things that arise from a cause, their cause the *Tathāgata* has told."

When a wise man hears that something has arisen due to causes and conditions, he immediately understands that it could be made to cease by the removal of those conditions, even without further explanation. It is the dustless stainless *Dhamma*-eye that enables one to see the *Nibbānic* solution in the very structure of the *saṃsāric* problem.

In our quotation from the *MahāNidānasutta* it was said that all pathways for verbal expression, terminology and designation exist so long as the vortex of *saṃsāra* is kept going.^[10] The implication, therefore, is that they have no existence beyond it. This is the significance of the word *ettāvatā*, "in so far only".

Ettāvatā jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā upapajjetha vā.^[11] "In so far only can one be born, or grow old, or die, or pass away, or reappear."

So the concepts of birth, decay-and-death, passing away and reappearing, are meaningful only in the context of the *saṃsāric* vortex between consciousness and name-and-form. If somehow or other this interrelation could be broken, this *saṃsāric*

vortex, the whirlpool, could be stopped, then, after that, nothing remains to be said, nothing remains to be predicated. And as it is said in the *Upasīvasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*:

Yena naṃ vajju, taṃ tassa natthi,lxxviii[12] "that by which they would speak of him, that for him exists not".

There are a number of Canonical passages that show us the relevance of this vortex simile to the understanding of the doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda*. In the *MahāPadānasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* we find a lengthy description of the manner in which the *bodhisatta Vipassī* got an insight into *paṭicca samuppāda*. We are told that his mode of approach was one of radical reflection, or *yoniso manasikāra*, literally: "attention by way of the matrix". One might as well say that it is an attention by way of the vortex. It is as if a man with keen vision, sitting under a tree by a river, were to watch how a fallen leaf gets carried away by the water current, only to get whirled up and disappear in a vortex.

It is clearly stated in the case of *Vipassī bodhisatta* that his understanding through wisdom came as a result of 'radical reflection', *yoniso manasikārā ahu paññāya abhisamayo*.lxxix[13] So his insight into *paṭicca samuppāda* was definitely not due to recollection of past lives. *Yoni* means the 'matrix', or the 'place of origin'. So in *yoniso manasikāra* always the attention has to turn towards the place of origin.

So, true to this method, we find the *bodhisatta Vipassī* starting his reasoning from the very end of the *paṭicca samuppāda* formula: *Kimhi nu kho sati jarāmaṇaṃ hoti, kiṃ paccayā jarāmaṇaṃ?* "Given what, does decay-and-death come to be, from which condition comes decay-and-death?" And to this question, the following answer occurred to him:

Jātiyā kho sati jarāmaṇaṃ hoti, jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ. "Given birth, does decay-and-death come to be, from birth as condition comes decay-and-death." In the same manner, taking pair by pair, he went on reasoning progressively. For instance his next question was:

Kimhi nu kho sati jāti hoti, kiṃ paccayā jāti? "Given what, does birth come to be, from which condition comes birth?" And the answer to it was:

Bhave kho sati jāti hoti, bhavapaccayā jāti. "Given becoming, birth comes to be, from becoming as condition comes birth." He went on reasoning like this up to and including name-and-form. But when he came to consciousness, he had to turn back. When he searched for the condition of consciousness, he found that name-and-form itself is the condition, whereby he understood their interdependence, and then he gave expression to the significance of this discovery in the following words:

Paccudāvattati kho idaṃ viññāṇaṃ nāmarūpamhā, nāparaṃ gacchati. Ettāvatā jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā upapajjetha vā, yadidaṃ nāmarūpapaccayā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā salāyatanam, salāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jāti-

paccayā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

By means of radical reflection the *bodhisatta Vipassī* understood that all concepts of birth, decay-and-death converge on the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form:

"This consciousness turns back from name-and-form, it does not go beyond. In so far can one be born, or grow old, or die, or pass away, or reappear, in so far as this is, namely: consciousness is dependent on name-and-form, and name-and-form on consciousness; dependent on name-and-form, the six sense-bases; dependent on the six sense-bases, contact; dependent on contact, feeling; dependent on feeling, craving; dependent on craving, grasping; dependent on grasping, becoming; dependent on becoming, birth; and dependent on birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Thus is the arising of this entire mass of suffering."

The fact that this understanding of *paṭicca samuppāda* signified the arising of the *Dhamma-eye* in *Vipassī bodhisatta* is stated in the following words:

Samudayo samudayo'ti kho, bhikkhave, Vipassissa bodhisattassa pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhum udapādi, ñāṇaṃ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi. "Arising, arising', thus, O! monks, in regard to things unheard of before, there arose in the *bodhisatta Vipassī* the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light." In the same way it is said that the *bodhisatta* clarified for himself the cessation aspect through radical reflection:

Kimhi nu kho asati jarāmaṇaṃ na hoti, kissa nirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ nirodho? "In the absence of what, will decay-and-death not be, with the cessation of what, is the cessation of decay-and-death?" And as the answer to it, the following thought occurred to him:

Jātiyā kho asati jarāmaṇaṃ na hoti, jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ nirodho. "In the absence of birth, there is no decay-and-death, with the cessation of birth is the cessation of decay-and-death." Likewise he went on reflecting progressively, until he reached the link between name-and-form and consciousness, and then it occurred to him:

Nāmarūpanirodhā viññāṇanirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāma-rūpanirodho. "From the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form."

Once this vital link is broken, that is, when consciousness ceases with the cessation of name-and-form, and name-and-form ceases with the cessation of consciousness, then all the other links following name-and-form, such as the six sense-bases, contact and feeling, come to cease immediately.

The *MahāPadānasutta* goes on to say that the *bodhisatta Vipassī* continued to dwell seeing the arising and passing away of the five grasping groups and that before long his mind was fully emancipated from the influxes and that he attained to full enlightenment. It is also said in the *sutta* in this connection that the *bodhisatta* followed

this mode of reflection, because he understood that it is the way of insight leading to awakening:

Adhigato kho myāyaṃ vipassanā maggo bodhāya. "I have found this path of insight to awakening, to enlightenment."

And as we saw above the most important point, the pivotal point, in this path of insight, is the relationship between name-and-form and consciousness. The commentary raises the question, why the *bodhisatta Vipassī* makes no mention of the first two links, *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā*, and gives the explanation that he could not see them, as they belong to the past.lxxx[14]

But this is not the reason. The very ignorance regarding the relationship between name-and-form and consciousness - is *avijjā*. And what accounts for the continuity of this relationship - is *saṅkhārā*. It is because of these preparations that the vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form is kept going.

Simply because the first two links are not mentioned in the *sutta*, the commentators give the explanation that they belong to the past. But it should be clear that the *bodhisatta Vipassī* could not have aroused the *Dhamma*-eye without those two links. Why they are not specially mentioned here is because they are in the background. It is true that there is a mode of exposition, in which *avijjā*, or ignorance, takes precedence. But what we have here is a different mode of exposition, according to which one has to stop short at the interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form.

As to the cause of this mutual relationship, we have to go back to the vortex simile. Usually, the progress of a current of water is visible at some distance away from the vortex. In this case, the current of water forgets its own impermanent, suffering and not-self nature, and goes ahead in search of a permanent, pleasurable and self nature. And this itself - is *avijjā*, or ignorance. This very tendency of the narrow water current to push on against the main body of water, is itself what is called consciousness.

Similarly, in the context of the *saṃsāric* individual, what forms the background for the interplay between consciousness and name-and-form, is the non-understanding that the net result of the interplay is suffering, that it only leads to suffering. In other words, it is the tendency to go ahead in search of a state of permanence, pleasure and self, ignoring the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self.

The heap of preparations or efforts arising out of that tendency are the *saṅkhārās*. It is on these very preparations or efforts that consciousness depends, and then we have name-and-form existing in relation to it. On the side of name-and-form, or beyond it, we have all the other links of the *paṭicca samuppāda*. So in this way we can form a mental picture of the formula of *paṭicca samuppāda* by some sort of a pictorial explanation. It seems, then, that this discourse is further proof of the statements found in the *MahāNidānasutta*.

There is yet another discourse, one preached by Venerable *Sāriputta*, which supports our conclusions. It is found in the *Nidānasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. There Venerable *Sāriputta* brings out a simile that is even simpler than the vortex

simile. He compares consciousness and name-and-form to two bundles of reeds. When two bundles of reeds stand, one supporting the other, if one of those is drawn out, the other would fall down. And if the latter is drawn out, the former will fall down: *Ekam ākaḍḍheyya, ekā papateyya, aparaṃ ce ākaḍḍheyya, aparā papateyya*.lxxxi[15]

The mutual interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form is like that of two bundles of reeds, mutually supporting each other. Having given this simile, Venerable *Sāriputta* goes on to mention the other links of the *paṭicca samuppāda* formula, as in the case of the *bodhisatta Vipassī's* insight. It runs: "Dependent on name-and-form, the six sense-bases; dependent on the six sense-bases, contact; dependent on contact, feelings" (and so on). And then the cessation aspect of these links is also given.

By way of illustration, let us suppose that the consciousness bundle of reeds is standing on the left side, and the name-and-form bundle is on the right. Then we have a number of other bundles, such as the six sense-bases, contact and feeling, all leaning on to the name-and-form bundle of reeds. These are all dependent on the name-and-form bundle.

Now, as soon as the consciousness bundle is drawn out, all the others on the right side fall down immediately. There is no interval. True to the qualities of the *Dhamma*, summed up in the terms *sandiṭṭhika*, *akālika* and *ehi-passika*, that is, to be seen here and now, not involving time, and inviting to come and see, the entire mass of *saṃsāric* suffering ceases immediately. So, this discourse is further proof of the fact that we have here quite a different state of affairs, than what is commonly believed to be the significance of the *paṭicca samuppāda* formula.

That is why we have pointed out that the concepts of birth, decay-and-death are of the nature of fading away. That is also why decay-and-death have been described as impermanent, made up, dependently arisen, of a nature to wither away, pass away, fade away and cease: *Aniccaṃ saṅkhatam paṭiccasamuppannaṃ khayadhammaṃ vayadhammaṃ virāgadhammaṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*.lxxxii[16]

When one comes to think of it, one may find it difficult to understand why decay-and-death are called impermanent and withering or decaying. But the reason is that all concepts, in so far as they are leaning on to the name-and-form bundle, have to fall down when the opposite bundle of reeds is drawn out. That is to say that the entire mass of *saṃsāric* suffering ceases immediately, and the whirlpool of *saṃsāra* comes to an end.

This, then, seems to be the most plausible conclusion. According to the interpretation we have adopted, in the *MahāHatthipadopamasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* Venerable *Sāriputta* brings out as a quotation a certain statement of the Buddha on *paṭicca samuppāda*. It runs:

Yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati; yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati.lxxxiii[17] "He who sees the law of dependent arising, sees the *Dhamma*; he who sees the *Dhamma*, sees the law of dependent arising."

This shows that the quintessence of the *Dhamma* is in fact the law of dependent arising itself. Now there are these six qualities of the *Dhamma*, summed up in the well known formula, which every Buddhist believes in. This *Dhamma* is well-preached, *svākkhāto*. It can be seen here and now, *sandiṭṭhiko*, that is, one can see it by oneself here in this very world. It is timeless, *akāliko*. It invites one to come and see, *ehi-passiko*. It leads one on, *opanayiko*. It can be realized by the wise each one by himself, *paccattaṃ veditaṅgaṃ viññūhi*.lxxxiv[18]

Though we all have faith in these qualities of the *Dhamma*, let us see whether the traditionally accepted interpretation of *paṭicca samuppāda* is faithful to these qualities, particularly to the two qualities *sandiṭṭhiko* and *akāliko*.

According to that accepted interpretation, presented by the venerable author of the *Visuddhimagga*, the first two links of the formula belong to the past, and the last two links belong to the future. The remaining eight links in the middle are taken to represent the present.lxxxv[19] That means, we have here the three periods of time. So it is not - timeless.

And that is why they explained that the *bodhisatta Vipassī* did not see the first two links. Perhaps, the presumption is, that since these two links belong to the past, they can be seen only by the knowledge of the recollection of past lives. But on the other hand, the *suttas* tell us that even the stream-winner has a clear understanding of *paṭicca samuppāda*: *Ariyo c'assa nāyo paññāya sudiṭṭho hoti suppaṭivid-dho*.lxxxvi[20] "By him the Noble Norm is well seen and well penetrated through with wisdom."

The 'noble norm' is none other than the law of dependent arising, and the stream-winner has seen it well, penetrated into it well with wisdom. The prefix *su-* implies the clarity of that vision. The question, then, is how a stream-winner, who has no knowledge of the recollection of past lives, can get this insight.

Whatever it may be, the accepted interpretation, as already mentioned, puts the first two links into the past. That is to say, ignorance and preparations are referred to the past. Birth, decay-and-death are referred to the future. The eight links in between are explained with reference to the present. Thus the formula is divided into three periods.

Not only that, in the attempt to interpret the formula as referring to three stages in the *samsāric* journey of an individual, additional links had to be interposed to prop up the interpretation.lxxxvii[21] Ignorance, preparations, craving, grasping and becoming are regarded as the past causes. Depending on these past causes, consciousness, name-and-form, six sense-bases, contact and feeling are said to arise as results in the present. And again, with ignorance, preparations, craving, grasping and becoming as present causes, consciousness, name-and-form, six sense-bases, contact and feeling arise as results in the future.

This kind of interpretation is also advanced. But this interpretation in terms of pentads violates the interrelatedness between the twelve links in the formula. We have already drawn attention to the fact of interrelation between the two links in each pair. In fact, that itself has to be taken as the law of dependent arising. That is the basic

principle itself: Because of one, the other arises. With its cessation, the other ceases. There is this mode of analysis, but then it is disrupted by the attempt to smuggle in additional links into the formula.

Furthermore, according to this accepted commentarial exegesis, even the term *bhava*, or becoming, is given a twofold interpretation. As *kamma*-process-becoming and rebirth-process-becoming. In the context *upādānapaccaya bhavo*, dependent on grasping is becoming, it is explained as rebirth-process-becoming, while in the case of the other context, *bhavapaccaya jāti*, dependent on becoming is birth, it is taken to mean *kamma*-process-becoming. So the same term is explained in two ways. Similarly, the term *jāti*, which generally means birth, is said to imply rebirth in the context of the formula of dependent arising.

There are many such weak points in the accepted interpretation. Quite a number of authoritative modern scholars have pointed this out. Now all these short-comings could be side-tracked, if we grant the fact, as already mentioned, that the secret of the entire *saṃsāric* vortex is traceable to the two links consciousness and name-and-form. As a matter of fact, the purpose of the formula of dependent arising is to show the way of arising and cessation of the entire mass of suffering, and not to illustrate three stages in the *saṃsāric* journey of an individual.

The distinctive feature of this law of dependent arising is its demonstrability in the present, as suggested by the terms ‘to be seen here and now’ and ‘timeless’, even as the *bodhisatta Vipassī* discovered it, through radical reflection itself. The salient characteristic of the teaching of the Buddha is its visibility here and now and timelessness. This fact is well revealed by the *Hemakasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. The *brahmin* youth *Hemaka* sings praise of the Buddha in the following verses:

Ye me pubbe viyākaṃsu,
huraṃ Gotamasāsanā,
iccāsi iti bhavissati,
sabbaṃ taṃ itihītihaṃ,
sabbaṃ taṃ takkavaḍḍhanaṃ,
nāhaṃ tattha abhiramiṃ.
Tvañca me dhammam akkhāhi,
taṇhā nigghātanaṃ muni,
yaṃ viditvā sato caraṃ,
tare loke visattikaṃ.lxxxviii[22]

"Those who explained to me before,

Outside the dispensation of *Gotama*,
All of them said: 'so it was, and so it will be',
But all that is 'so and so' talk,
All that is productive of logic,
I did not delight therein.
But now to me, O! sage,
Proclaim your *Dhamma*,
That is destructive of craving,
By knowing which and mindfully faring along,
One might get beyond the world's viscosity."

Now, to paraphrase: Whatever teachers explained to me their teachings outside your dispensation, used to bring in the past and the future in their explanations, saying: "So it was, and so it will be." That is, they were always referring to a past and a future. But all that can be summed up as 'so and so' talk.

By the way, the term *itihītiha* had already become a technical term for 'hearsay' among the ascetics. Such teachings based on hearsay were productive of logic, as for instance testified by the *Sabbāsavasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. "Was I in the past, was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I become in the future?" (and so on) lxxxix[23]

"But, I was not pleased with such teachings", says *Hemaka*, "It is only you, O! sage, who teaches the *Dhamma* that destroys the craving in the present, understanding which, and mindfully following it accordingly, one could go beyond the sticky craving in the world." *Hemaka's* praise of the Buddha was inspired by this most distinctive feature in the *Dhamma*.

We have already stated that by '*Dhamma*' is meant the law of dependent arising. This is further proof that the basic principle underlying the formula of dependent arising could be traced to the constant relationship between consciousness and name-and-form, already present in one's mental continuum, without running into the past or leaping towards the future.

We know that, in order to ascertain whether a banana trunk is pith-less, it is not necessary to go on removing its bark, layer after layer, from top to bottom. We only have to take a sharp sword and cut the trunk in the middle, so that the cross-section will reveal to us its pith-less nature. Similarly, if we cut in the middle the banana trunk of preparations with the sharp sword of wisdom, *paññāmayam tikhīṇamasim*

gahetvā,xc[24] its internal structure as revealed by the cross-section will convince us of the essence-less nature of the group of preparations.

Whatever existence there was in the past, that too had the same essence-less nature. And whatever existence there will be in the future, will have this same essencelessness. And I see it now, in my own mental continuum, as something visible here and now, not involving time. It is with such a conviction that the noble disciple utters the words: "Arising, arising! Cessation, cessation!" That is how he arrives at the realization summed up in the phrase:

"*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*.xci[25]
"Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease." All this goes to show that the accepted interpretation has certain short-comings.

To take up another simile, we have already alluded to the fact that the Buddha has been compared to a physician.xcii[26] Though this might well sound a modernism, we may say that a specialist doctor today needs only a drop of blood or blood tissue for a full diagnosis of a patient's disease. When seen under the microscope, that blood tissue reveals the pathological condition of the patient. Even the patient himself could be invited to see for himself the result of the blood test.

But once the disease has been cured, the doctor could invite the patient again to undergo a blood test, if he likes to assure himself of the fact that that disease has been effectively treated. The Buddha's teaching has a similar 'here and now' and timeless quality. What is noteworthy is that this quality is found in the law of dependent arising.

Then there is another question that crops up out of this traditional interpretation of the formula of dependent arising. That is, the reason why the two links, ignorance and preparations, are referred to the past.

In some discourses, like the *MahāNidānasutta*, there is a discussion about a descent of consciousness into a mother's womb.xciii[27] Simply because there is such a discussion, one might think that the law of dependent arising has reference to a period beyond one's conception in a mother's womb.

But if we carefully examine the trend of this discussion and analyse its purpose, such a conclusion will appear to be groundless. The point which the Buddha was trying to drive home into Venerable *Ānanda* by his catechism, is that the constant interrelation that exists between consciousness and name-and-form is present even during one's life in the mother's womb. This catechism can be analysed into four parts. The first question is:

Viññāṇaṃ va hi, Ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchismiṃ samuccissatha? And Venerable *Ānanda*'s answer is: *No h'etaṃ, bhante*. "If, *Ānanda*, consciousness were not to descend into a mother's womb, would name-and-form remain there?" "It would not, Lord."

The Buddha is asking whether name-and-form can persist in remaining inside the mother's womb, if consciousness refuses to descend into it, so to say. The word

samuccissatha presents a difficulty as regards etymology. But it is quite likely that it has to do with the idea of remaining, as it has an affinity to the word *uccitt̥ha*, left over, remnant.

So the point raised here is that, in the event of a non-descent of consciousness into the mother's womb, name-and-form will not be left remaining there. Name-and-form has to have the support of consciousness. However, in this interrelation, it is consciousness that decides the issue. If consciousness does not descend, name-and-form will not remain there.

So even if, at the moment of death, one has a thought of some mother's womb, if consciousness does not descend in the proper manner, name-and-form cannot stay there. Name-and-form has always to be understood in relation to consciousness. It is not something that is to be found in trees and rocks. It always goes hand in hand with consciousness. So, the upshot of the above discussion is that name-and-form will not remain there without the support of consciousness.

Venerable *Ānanda*'s response to the first question, then, is : "That indeed is not the case, O! Lord." Then the Buddha asks: *Viññāṇaṃ va hi, Ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ okkamitvā vakkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ itthattāya abhinibbattissatha?* "If, *Ānanda*, consciousness, having descended into the mother's womb, were to slip out of it, would name-and-form be born into this state of existence?" Venerable *Ānanda*'s reply to it is again: "That indeed is not the case, Lord."

Now the question is: *Ānanda*, if for some reason or other, consciousness, having descended into the mother's womb, slips out of it, will name-and-form secure birth as a this-ness, or *itthatta*. We have mentioned above that *itthatta* is a term with some special significance.xciv[28] That is, how a 'there' becomes a 'here', when a person takes birth in a particular form of existence. In short, what it implies, is that a person comes to be born.

In other words, if consciousness, having descended into the mother's womb, slips out of it, that name-and-form will not mature into a this-ness and be born into a this-ness. There is no possibility of the this-ness coming into being. For there to be a this-ness, both consciousness and name-and-form must be there. We can understand, then, why Venerable *Ānanda* replied in the negative.

The next question the Buddha puts, is this:

Viññāṇaṃ va hi, Ānanda, daharasseva sato vocchijjissatha kumārakassa vā kumārikāya vā, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjissatha? "If, *Ānanda*, the consciousness of a boy or a girl were cut off when he or she is still young, will name-and-form come to growth and maturity?" To that question too, Venerable *Ānanda* replies: "That indeed is not the case, Lord."

Now that the preliminary questions have been correctly answered, the Buddha then comes out with the following conclusion, since the necessary premises are complete:

Tasmātih'Ānanda, es' eva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo nāmarūpassa, yadidaṃ viññānaṃ. "Therefore, *Ānanda*, this itself is the cause, this is the reason, origin and condition for name-and-form, namely consciousness."

What is emphasized here, is the importance of consciousness. Out of the two, namely consciousness and name-and-form, what carries more weight with it, is consciousness, even if there be a trace of name-and-form. What the above questionnaire makes clear, is that name-and-form arises in a mother's womb because of consciousness. But that name-and-form will not remain there, if consciousness does not properly descend into the womb.

Also, if consciousness, after its descent, were to slip out, name-and-form will not reach the state of a this-ness. So much so that, even after one's birth as a boy or girl, if consciousness gets cut off in some way or other, name-and-form will not reach growth and maturity. So from all this, it is clear that consciousness is an essential condition for there to be name-and-form. Then the Buddha introduces the fourth step:

Viññānaṃ va hi, Ānanda, nāmarūpe patiṭṭhaṃ na labhissatha, api no kho āyatim jātijarāmaṇaṃ dukkhasamudayasambhavo paññāyetha? "If, *Ānanda*, consciousness were not to find a footing, or get established in, name-and-form, would there be an arising or origin of birth, decay, death and suffering in the future?" "No indeed, Lord", says Venerable *Ānanda*.

Now this fourth point is extremely important. What it implies is that, though the aforesaid is the normal state of affairs in *saṃsāra*, if for some reason or other consciousness does not get established on name-and-form, if at all such a contrivance were possible, there will not be any *saṃsāric* suffering again. And this position, too, Venerable *Ānanda* grants.

So from this discussion, too, it is obvious that, simply because there is a reference to a mother's womb in it, we cannot conclude that ignorance and preparations are past causes. It only highlights the mutual relationship between consciousness and name-and-form.

Now the question that comes up next is: "How does consciousness not get established on name-and-form? In what respects does it not get established, and how?"

The consciousness of a *saṃsāric* individual is always an established consciousness. It is in the nature of this consciousness to find a footing on name-and-form. These two go together. That is why in the *Sampasādanīyasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* it is mentioned in the discussion on the attainments to vision, *dassanasamāpatti*, that a person with such an attainment sees a man's stream of consciousness that is not cut off on either side, established in this world and in the next: *Purisassa ca viññāṇasotaṃ pajānāti, ubhayato abbochinnaṃ idha loke patiṭṭhitaṅca para loke patiṭṭhitaṅca.*xcv[29] What is implied here is the established nature of consciousness. The consciousness of a *saṃsāric* individual is established both in this world and in the next.

Another attainment of vision, mentioned in the *sutta*, concerns the seeing of a man's stream of consciousness not cut off on either side, and not established in this world or in the next. And that is a reference to the consciousness of an *arahant*. So an *arahant's* consciousness is an unestablished consciousness, whereas the consciousness of the *saṃsāric* individual is an established consciousness.

That is precisely why in the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* and in the *Sāratthapakāsinī*, where the episode of Venerable *Godhika's* suicide is mentioned, it is said that, though he cut his own neck intending to commit suicide, he was able to attain *parinibbāna* as an *arahant* by radically attending to the deadly pain.xcvi[30] But *Māra* took him to be an ordinary person and hovered around in search of his consciousness - in vain. The Buddha, on the other hand, declared that Venerable *Godhika* passed away with an unestablished consciousness:

Appatiṭṭhitena ca, bhikkhave, viññāṇena Godhiko kulaputto parinibbuto.xcvii[31]
"O! monks, the clansman *Godhika* passed away with an unestablished consciousness."

The consciousness of an ordinary *saṃsāric* individual is always established. The above mentioned relationship is always there. Because of this we can say that there is always a knot in the consciousness of the *saṃsāric* individual. For him, this world and the next world are tied together in a knot. In this case, what is needed, is only the untying of the knot. There is no need of a fresh tying up, as the knot is already there.

But the term *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*, or rebirth-linking-consciousness, is now so widely used that we cannot help making use of it, even in relating a *Jātaka* story. The idea is that, after the death-consciousness, there occurs a rebirth-linking-consciousness. However, some scholars even raise the question, why a term considered so important is not to be found in the discourses. On many an occasion the Buddha speaks about the descent into a womb. But apart from using such terms as *ok-kanti*,xcviii[32] descent, *gabbhassa avakkanti*,xcix[33] descent into a womb, and *uppatti*,c[34] arising, he does not seem to have used the term *paṭisandhi*.

What is meant by this term *paṭisandhi*? It seems to imply a tying up of two existences. After death there is a 'relinking'. We have mentioned above, in connection with the simile of the bundles of reeds that, when the consciousness bundle of reeds is drawn, the name-and-form bundle of reeds falls. And when the name-and-form bundle of reeds is drawn, the consciousness bundle of reeds falls. And that there is a relationship of mutuality condition between them.

The question, then, is why a tying up is brought in, while granting the relationship by mutuality condition. Because, going by the same simile, it would be tantamount to saying that rebirth-linking-consciousness straightens up when death-consciousness falls, as if, when one bundle of reeds is drawn, the other straightens up. This contradicts the nature of mutuality condition. There is no timelessness here. Therefore *paṭisandhi* is a term that needs critical scrutiny.

The mental continuum of a *saṃsāric* being is always knotted with a tangle within and a tangle without.ci[35] And it is already implicit in the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. What happens at the dying moment is usually posed as a deep problem. But if we carefully examine the situation in the light of

Canonical discourses, we could see here an illustration of the law of dependent arising itself.

Now as far as this established consciousness and the unestablished consciousness are concerned, we have already drawn attention to the relationship between a 'here' and a 'there'. We came across the term *itthatta*, otherwise called *itthabhāva*. As a rendering for it, we have used the term 'this-ness'. And then we have already pointed out that this *itthabhāva*, or this-ness, goes hand in hand with *aññatthābhāva*, or otherwise-ness. That is to say, wherever a this-ness arises, wherever a concept of a something arises, as a rule that itself is the setting in of transformation or change.

This-ness and other-wiseness are therefore to be found in a pair-wise combination. Wherever there is a this-ness, there itself is an otherwise-ness. So in this way, because of the fact that, due to this this-ness itself, wherever this-ness arises, otherwise-ness arises, together with it, wherever there is a 'there', there is always a 'here'. This, then, is how the consciousness of the *saṃsāric* being functions.

As far as one's everyday life is concerned, what is called the conscious body, is the body with consciousness. Generally we regard this body as something really our own. Not only that, we can also objectify things outside us, beyond our range of vision, things that are objects of thought or are imagined. That is what is meant by the Canonical phrase:

Imasmiñca saviññāṇake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu ahaṃkāra mamaṃkāra mānānusatā na honti. [36] "There are no latencies to conceit by way of I-making and mine-making regarding this conscious body and all outside signs."

What it implies, is that one can have latencies to conceit by way of I-making and mine-making regarding this conscious body as well as all outside signs. Now, if we consider the deeper implications of this statement, we can get at some new perspective for understanding the nature of the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form.

If someone, deeply attached to a person who is not near him, but living somewhere far far away, is heavily immersed in some deep thought, then, even if there is some painful contact, such as the prick of a fly, or the bite of a mosquito, or even if another comes and shakes him by the shoulder, he might not feel it, because he is so immersed in the thought.

Now, why is that? Normally, the rightful place for consciousness is this body. But what has happened now, is that it has gone away temporarily and united with the name-and-form outside, with that object far away. But it can be awakened. This is the way the mind travels.

It is due to a lack of clear understanding about the journey of the mind, that the concept of a relinking-consciousness was found to be necessary. The way the mind travels is quite different from the way the body travels. The journey of the body is a case of leaving one place to go to another. But the mind's journey is not like that. It is a sort of whirling or turning round, as in the case of a whirlpool or a vortex.

That is to say, just as in the case of a rubber-band which could be stretched lengthwise or crosswise, there is a certain whirling round going on between consciousness and name-and-form. It is because of that whirling motion, which could either be circular or oval shaped, that consciousness and name-and-form could either get drawn apart, or drawn in, as they go round and round in a kind of vortical interplay.

So in a situation like the one mentioned above, for that person, the distant has become near. At the start, when he fell to thinking, it was a 'there' for him. Then it became a 'here'. And the here became a 'there'. This brings out, in a subtle way, the relevance of these concepts to the question of understanding such teachings as the law of dependent arising.

Concepts of a here and a there are in a way relative. They presuppose each other. *Itthabhāva*, this-ness, and *aññathābhāva*, otherwise-ness, referred to above, mean the same thing. *Itthabhāva* goes hand in hand with *aññathābhāva*. They are bound in a pair-wise combination. When you drag in one, the other follows of necessity. It is the same in the case of the relationship between birth on the one hand, and decay-and-death on the other, as already mentioned.

Also, consciousness and name-and-form always move in an orbit. It is not something like the journey of the body. Thought goes, but it rests on consciousness, it gravitates towards consciousness. It is because consciousness also has gone there that we say someone is 'immersed' or 'engrossed' in some thought. It is consciousness that carries more weight.

This is sufficiently clear even from the *Dhamma* discussion of the Buddha, quoted above. If consciousness does not descend into a mother's womb, name-and-form will not remain there. If consciousness does not join in to provide the opportunity, it will not grow. This is the nature of the relationship between them.

Though not well authenticated, cases have been reported of persons, on the verge of death, going through such unusual experiences as visualizing their own body from some outside standpoint. Taking into consideration the above mentioned relationship, this is quite understandable. That external standpoint might not be a place which has the ability to sustain that consciousness, or which is capable of creating a new body out of the four primary elements. All the same, it temporarily escapes and goes there and is now wavering to decide, whether or not to come back to the body, as it were. It is on such occasions that one visualizes one's own body from outside.

So here we have the norm of the mind's behaviour. Seen in this way, there is no need for a fresh tying up, or relinking, because it is the same vortex that is going on all the time. In the context of this *saṃsāric* vortex, the 'there' becomes a 'here', and a 'here' becomes a 'there'. The distant becomes a near, and a near becomes a distant.

It is owing to this state of affairs that the consciousness of the *saṃsāric* individual is said to be always established. There is a certain twin character about it. Whenever consciousness leaves this body for good, it goes and rests on a name-and-form object which it had already taken up. In other words, this is why the Buddha did not find it

necessary to coin a new term to express the idea of conception in some mother's womb.

Consciousness has as its object name-and-form. It is precisely because of consciousness that one can speak of it as a name-and-form. It is like the shadow that falls on consciousness. Name-and-form is like an image.

Now in taking a photograph, there is a similar turn of events. Even if one does not pose for the photograph with so much make-up, even if one turns one's back to the camera, at least a shade of his shape will be photographed as an image, if not his form. Similarly, in the case of the *saṃsāric* individual, even if he does not entertain an intention or thought construct, if he has at least the latency, *anusaya*, that is enough for him to be reborn in some form of existence or other.

That is why the Buddha has preached such an important discourse as the *Cetanāsutta* of the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. It runs:

Yañca, bhikkhave, ceteti yañca pakappeti yañca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe nāmarūpassa avakkanti hoti. Nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanam̐, saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānam̐, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇam̐ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.ciii[37]

"Monks, whatever one intends, whatever one mentally constructs, whatever lies latent, that becomes an object for the stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and grown, there is the descent of name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form the six sense-bases come to be; dependent on the six sense-bases arises contact; and dependent on contact arises feeling; dependent on feeling, craving; dependent on craving, grasping; dependent on grasping, becoming; dependent on becoming, birth; dependent on birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Such is the arising of this entire mass of suffering." Then comes the second instance:

No ce, bhikkhave, ceteti no ce pakappeti, atha ce anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe nāmarūpassa avakkanti hoti. Nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanam̐, saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānam̐, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇam̐ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

"Monks, even if one does not intend or construct mentally, but has a latency, that becomes an object for the stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be the establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and grown, there is the descent of name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form the six sense-bases come to be; dependent on the six sense-bases arises contact; and dependent on contact, feeling; dependent on feeling, craving; dependent

on craving, grasping; dependent on grasping, becoming; dependent on becoming, birth; dependent on birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Such is the arising of this entire mass of suffering."

The significance of this second paragraph is that it speaks of a person who, at the time of death, has no intentions or thought constructs as such. But he has the latency. This itself is sufficient as an object for the stationing of consciousness. It is as if he has turned his back to the camera, but got photographed all the same, due to his very presence there. Now comes the third instance:

Yato ca kho, bhikkhave, no ceva ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ na hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe asati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti. Tadappatiṭṭhite viññāṇe avirūlḥe nāmarūpassa avakkanti na hoti. Nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho, saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho, taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ soka-paridevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhak-khandhassa nirodho hoti.

"But, monks, when one neither intends, nor constructs mentally, and has no latency either, then there is not that object for the stationing of consciousness. There being no object, there is no establishment of consciousness. When consciousness is not established and not grown up, there is no descent of name-and-form, and with the cessation of name-and-form, there comes to be the cessation of the six sense-bases; with the cessation of the six sense-bases, the cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, the cessation of grasping; with the cessation of grasping, the cessation of becoming; with the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, the cessation of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to cease. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering."

This third instance is the most significant. In the first instance, there were the intentions, thought constructs and latency. In the second instance, that person had no intentions or thought constructs, but only latency was there. In this third instances, there is neither an intention, nor a thought construct, and not even a latency.

It is then that there comes to be no object for the stationing of consciousness. There being no object, there is no establishment of consciousness, and when consciousness is unestablished and not grown, there is no descent of name-and-form. Where there is no descent of name-and-form, there at last comes to be that cessation of name-and-form with which the six sense-bases, and all the rest of it, down to the entire mass of *samsāric* suffering, cease altogether then and there.

Nibbana Sermons - Part 4

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

*Etam santam, etam paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.civ[1]*

"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. Towards the end of the last sermon, we were trying to explain how the process of the *saṃsāric* journey of beings could be understood even with the couple of terms *itthabhāva* and *aññatthābhāva*, or this-ness and otherwise-ness.cv[2] On an earlier occasion, we happened to quote the following verse in the *Sutta Nipāta*:

Taṇhā dutiyo puriso,

dīghamaddhāna saṃsāraṃ,

itthabhāvaññatthābhāvaṃ,

saṃsāraṃ nātivattati.cvi[3]

It means: "The man with craving as his second", or "as his companion", "faring on for a long time in *saṃsāra*, does not transcend the round, which is of the nature of a this-ness and an otherwise-ness."

This is further proof that the two terms imply a circuit. It is a circuit between a 'here' and a 'there', or a 'this-ness' and an 'otherwise-ness'. It is a turning round, an alternation or a circuitous journey. It is like a rotation on the spot. It is an ambivalence between a here and a there.

It is the relationship between this this-ness and otherwise-ness that we tried to illustrate with quotations from the *suttas*. We mentioned in particular that consciousness, when it leaves this body and gets well established on a preconceived object, which in fact is its name-and-form object, that name-and-form attains growth and maturity there itself.cvii[4] Obviously, therefore, name-and-form is a necessary condition for the sustenance and growth of consciousness in a mother's womb.

It should be clearly understood that the passage of consciousness from here to a mother's womb is not a movement from one place to another, as in the case of the body. In reality, it is only a difference of point of view, and not a transmigration of a soul. In other words, when consciousness leaves this body and comes to stay in a mother's womb, when it is fully established there, 'that' place becomes a 'this' place. From the point of view of that consciousness, the 'there' becomes a 'here'. Consequently, from the new point of view, what was earlier a 'here', becomes a 'there'. What was formerly 'that place' has now become 'this place' and vice versa. That way, what actually is involved here, is a change of point of view. So it does not mean completely leaving one place and going to another, as is usually meant by the journey of an individual.

The process, then, is a sort of going round and round. This is all the more clear by the Buddha's statement that even consciousness is dependently arisen. There are instances in which the view that this selfsame consciousness fares on in *saṃsāra* by itself, *tadevidaṃ viññāṇaṃ sandhāvati saṃsarati, anaññaṃ*, is refuted as a wrong view.cviii[5]

On the one hand, for the sustenance and growth of name-and-form in a mother's womb, consciousness is necessary. On the other hand, consciousness necessarily requires an object for its stability. It could be some times an intention, or else a thought construct. In the least, it needs a trace of latency, or *anusaya*. This fact is clear enough from the *sutta* quotations we brought up towards the end of the previous sermon. From the *Cetanāsutta*, we happened to quote on an earlier occasion, it is obvious that at least a trace of latency is necessary for the sustenance of consciousness.cix[6]

When consciousness gets established in a mother's womb, with this condition in the least, name-and-form begins to grow. It grows, at it were, with a flush of branches, in the form of the six sense bases, to produce a fresh tree of suffering. It is this idea that is voiced by the following well known verse in the *Dhammapada*:

Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe

chinno pi rukkho punareva rūhati

evam pi taṇhānusaye anūhate

nibbattati dukkham idaṃ punappunaṃ.cx[7]

"Just as a tree, so long as its root is unharmed and firm,

Though once cut down, will none the less grow up again,

Even so, when craving's latency is not yet rooted out,

This suffering gets reborn again and again."

It is clear from this verse too that the latency to craving holds a very significant place in the context of the *saṃsāric* journey of a being. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* one comes across the following statement by the Buddha: *Kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sineho.cxi[8]* "Kamma is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving is the moisture." This, in effect, means that consciousness grows in the field of *kamma* with craving as the moisture.

It is in accordance with this idea and in the context of this particular simile that we have to interpret the reply of *Selā Therī* to a question raised by *Māra*. In the *Sagātha Vagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* one comes across the following riddle put by *Māra* to the *arahant* nun *Selā*:

Ken'idaṃ pakataṃ bimbaṃ,

ko nu bimbassa kārako,
kvannu bimbaṃ samuppannaṃ,
kvannu bimbaṃ nirujjhati?^{cxii}[9]
"By whom was this image wrought,
Who is the maker of this image,
Where has this image arisen,
And where does the image cease?"

The image meant here is one's body, or one's outward appearance which, for the conventional world, is name-and-form. *Selā Therī* gives her answer in three verses:

Nayidaṃ attakataṃ bimbaṃ,
nayidaṃ parakataṃ aghaṃ,
hetuṃ paṭicca sambhūtaṃ,
hetubhaṅgā nirujjhati.
Yathā aññataraṃ bījaṃ,
khette vuttaṃ virūhati,
pathavīrasañcāgama,
sinehañca tadūbhayaṃ.

Evaṃ khandhā ca dhātuyo,
cha ca āyatanā ime,
hetuṃ paṭicca sambhūtā,
hetubhaṅgā nirujjhare.

"Neither self-wrought is this image,
Nor yet other-wrought is this misery,
By reason of a cause, it came to be,
By breaking up the cause, it ceases to be.

Just as in the case of a certain seed,

Which when sown on the field would feed

On the taste of the earth and moisture,

And by these two would grow.

Even so, all these aggregates

Elements and bases six,

By reason of a cause have come to be,

By breaking up the cause will cease to be."

The first verse negates the idea of creation and expresses the conditionally arisen nature of this body. The simile given in the second verse illustrates this law of dependent arising. It may be pointed out that this simile is not one chosen at random. It echoes the idea behind the Buddha's statement already quoted, *kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sineho*. *Kamma* is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture.

Here the venerable *Therī* is replying from the point of view of *Dhamma*, which takes into account the mental aspect as well. It is not simply the outward visible image, as commonly understood by *nāma-rūpa*, but that image which falls on consciousness as its object. The reason for the arising and growth of *nāma-rūpa* is therefore the seed of consciousness. That consciousness seed grows in the field of *kamma*, with craving as the moisture. The outgrowth is in terms of aggregates, elements and bases. The cessation of consciousness is none other than *Nibbāna*.

Some seem to think that the cessation of consciousness occurs in an *arahant* only at the moment of his *parinibbāna*, at the end of his life span. But this is not the case. Very often, the deeper meanings of important *suttas* have been obliterated by the tendency to interpret the references to consciousness in such contexts as the final occurrence of consciousness in an *arahant's* life - *carimaka viññāṇa*.cxiii[10]

What is called the cessation of consciousness has a deeper sense here. It means the cessation of the specifically prepared consciousness, *abhisāṅkhata viññāṇa*. An *arahant's* experience of the cessation of consciousness is at the same time the experience of the cessation of name-and-form. Therefore, we can attribute a deeper significance to the above verses.

In support of this interpretation, we can quote the following verse in the *Munisutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*:

Saṅkhāya vatthūni pamāya bījaṃ,

sineham assa nānuppavecche,

sa ve munī jātikhayantadassī,

takkaṃ pahāya na upeti saṅkhaṃ.cxiv[11]

"Having surveyed the field and measured the seed,

He waters it not for moisture,

That sage in full view of birth's end,

Lets go of logic and comes not within reckoning."

By virtue of his masterly knowledge of the fields and his estimate of the seed of consciousness, he does not moisten it with craving. Thereby he sees the end of birth and transcends logic and worldly convention. This too shows that the deeper implications of the *MahāNidānasutta*, concerning the descent of consciousness into the mother's womb, have not been sufficiently appreciated so far.

Anusaya, or latency, is a word of special significance. What is responsible for rebirth, or *punabbhava*, is craving, which very often has the epithet *ponobhavikā* attached to it. The latency to craving is particularly instrumental in giving one yet another birth to fare on in *saṃsāra*. There is also a tendency to ignorance, which forms the basis of the latency to craving. It is the tendency to get attached to worldly concepts, without understanding them for what they are. That tendency is a result of ignorance in the worldlings and it is in itself a latency. In the *sutta* terminology the word *nissaya* is often used to denote it. The cognate word *nissita* is also used alongside. It means 'one who associates something', while *nissaya* means 'association'.

As a matter of fact, here it does not have the same sense as the word has in its common usage. It goes deeper, to convey the idea of 'leaning on' something. Leaning on is also a form of association. Worldlings have a tendency to tenaciously grasp the concepts in worldly usage, to cling to them dogmatically and lean on them. They believe that the words they use have a reality of their own, that they are categorically true in their own right. Their attitude towards concepts is tinged by craving, conceit and views.

We come across this word *nissita* in quite a number of important *suttas*. It almost sounds like a topic of meditation. In the *Channovādasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* there is a cryptic passage, which at a glance looks more or less like a riddle:

Nissitassa calitaṃ, anissitassa calitaṃ natthi. Calite asati passaddhi, passaddhiyā sati nati na hoti, natiyā asati āgatigati na hoti, āgatigatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti, cutūpapāte asati nev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantare. Es' ev' anto dukhassa.cxv[12]

"To the one attached, there is wavering. To the unattached one, there is no wavering. When there is no wavering, there is calm. When there is calm, there is no inclination. When there is no inclination, there is no coming and going. When there is no coming and going, there is no death and birth. When there is no death and birth, there is neither a 'here' nor a 'there' nor a 'between the two'. This itself is the end of suffering."

It looks as if the ending of suffering is easy enough. On the face of it, the passage seems to convey this much. To the one who leans on something, there is wavering or movement. He is perturbable. Though the first sentence speaks about the one attached, the rest of the passage is about the unattached one. That is to say, the one released. So here we see the distinction between the two. The one attached is movable, whereas the unattached one is not. When there is no wavering or perturbation, there is calm. When there is calm, there is no inclination. The word *nati* usually means 'bending'. So when there is calm, there is no bending or inclination. When there is no bending or inclination, there is no coming and going. When there is no coming and going, there is no passing away or reappearing. When there is neither a passing away nor a reappearing, there is neither a 'here', nor a 'there', nor any position in between. This itself is the end of suffering.

The *sutta* passage, at a glance, appears like a jumble of words. It starts by saying something about the one attached, *nissita*. It is limited to just one sentence: 'To one attached, there is wavering.' But we can infer that, due to his wavering and unsteadiness or restlessness, there is inclination, *nati*. The key word of the passage is *nati*. Because of that inclination or bent, there is a coming and going. Given the twin concept of coming and going, there is the dichotomy between passing away and reappearing, *cuti/uppatti*. When these two are there, the two concepts 'here' and 'there' also come in. And there is a 'between the two' as well. Wherever there are two ends, there is also a middle. So it seems that in this particular context the word *nati* has a special significance.

The person who is attached is quite unlike the released person. Because he is not released, he always has a forward bent or inclination. In fact, this is the nature of craving. It bends one forward. In some *suttas* dealing with the question of rebirth, such as the *Kutūhalasālāsutta*, craving itself is sometimes called the grasping, *upādāna*.cxvi[13] So it is due to this very inclination or bent that the two concepts of coming and going, come in. Then, in accordance with them, the two concepts of passing away and reappearing, fall into place.

The idea of a journey, when viewed in the context of *saṃsāra*, gives rise to the idea of passing away and reappearing. Going and coming are similar to passing away and reappearing. So then, there is the implication of two places, all this indicates an attachment. There is a certain dichotomy about the terms here and there, and passing away and reappearing. Due to that dichotomous nature of the concepts, which beings tenaciously hold on to, the journeying in *saṃsāra* takes place in accordance with craving. As we have mentioned above, an alternation or transition occurs.

As for the released person, about whom the passage is specially concerned, his mind is free from all those conditions. To the unattached, there is no wavering. Since he has no wavering or unsteadiness, he has no inclination. As he has no inclination, there is no coming and going for him. As there is no coming and going, he has no passing away or reappearing. There being no passing away or reappearing, there is neither a here, nor a there, nor any in between. That itself is the end of suffering.

The *Udāna* version of the above passage has something significant about it. There the entire *sutta* consists of these few sentences. But the introductory part of it says that the Buddha was instructing, inciting and gladdening the monks with a *Dhamma* talk

connected with *Nibbāna*: *Tena kho pana samayena Bhagavā bhikkhū nibbāna-
paṭisaṃyuttāya dhammiyā kathāya sandasseti samādapeti samuttejeti
sampahaṃseti*.cxvii[14] This is a pointer to the fact that this sermon is on *Nibbāna*.
So the implication is that in *Nibbāna* the *arahant's* mind is free from any attachments.

There is a discourse in the *Nidāna* section of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which affords us a deeper insight into the meaning of the word *nissaya*. It is the *Kaccāyanagottasutta*, which is also significant for its deeper analysis of right view. This is how the Buddha introduces the sermon: *Dvayanissito khvāyaṃ, Kaccāyana, loko yebhuyyena: atthitañceva natthitañca. Lokasamudayaṃ kho, Kaccāyana, yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti. Lokanirodhaṃ kho, Kaccāyana, yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti*.cxviii[15] "This world, *Kaccāyana*, for the most part, bases its views on two things: on existence and non-existence. Now, *Kaccāyana*, to one who with right wisdom sees the arising of the world as it is, the view of non-existence regarding the world does not occur. And to one who with right wisdom sees the cessation of the world as it really is, the view of existence regarding the world does not occur."

The Buddha comes out with this discourse in answer to the following question raised by the *brahmin Kaccāyana*: *Sammā diṭṭhi, sammā diṭṭhī'ti, bhante, vuccati. Kittāvata nu kho, bhante, sammā diṭṭhi hoti?* "Lord, 'right view', 'right view', they say. But how far, Lord, is there 'right view'?"

In his answer, the Buddha first points out that the worldlings mostly base themselves on a duality, the two conflicting views of existence and non-existence, or 'is' and 'is not'. They would either hold on to the dogmatic view of eternalism, or would cling to nihilism. Now as to the right view of the noble disciple, it takes into account the process of arising as well as the process of cessation, and thereby avoids both extremes. This is the insight that illuminates the middle path.

Then the Buddha goes on to give a more detailed explanation of right view: *Upayupādānābhinivesavinibandho khvāyaṃ, Kaccāyana, loko yebhuyyena. Tañcāyaṃ upayupādānaṃ cetaso adhiṭṭhānaṃ abhinivesānusayaṃ na upeti na upādiyati nādiṭṭhāti: 'attā me'ti. 'Dukkham eva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati, dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhatī'ti na kañkhati na vicikicchati aparapaccayā ñāṇam ev' assa ettha hoti. Ettāvata kho, Kaccāyana, sammā diṭṭhi hoti.*

"The world, *Kaccāyana*, for the most part, is given to approaching, grasping, entering into and getting entangled as regards views. Whoever does not approach, grasp, and take his stand upon that proclivity towards approaching and grasping, that mental standpoint, namely the idea: 'This is my soul', he knows that what arises is just suffering and what ceases is just suffering. Thus, he is not in doubt, is not perplexed, and herein he has the knowledge that is not dependent on another. Thus far, *Kaccāyana*, he has right view."

The passage starts with a string of terms which has a deep philosophical significance. *Upaya* means 'approaching', *upādāna* is 'grasping', *abhinivesa* is 'entering into', and *vinibandha* is the consequent entanglement. The implication is that the worldling is prone to dogmatic involvement in concepts through the stages mentioned above in an ascending order.

The attitude of the noble disciple is then outlined in contrast to the above dogmatic approach, and what follows after it. As for him, he does not approach, grasp, or take up the standpoint of a self. The word *anusaya*, latency or ‘lying dormant’, is also brought in here to show that even the proclivity towards such a dogmatic involvement with a soul or self, is not there in the noble disciple. But what, then, is his point of view? What arises and ceases is nothing but suffering. There is no soul or self to lose, it is only a question of arising and ceasing of suffering. This, then, is the right view.

Thereafter the Buddha summarizes the discourse and brings it to a climax with an impressive declaration of his *via media*, the middle path based on the formula of dependent arising:

‘Sabbam atthī’ti kho, Kaccāyana, ayam eko anto. ‘Sabbam natthī’ti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te, Kaccāyana, ubho ante anupagamma majjhena Tathāgato Dhammaṃ deseti:

Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanāṃ, saḷāyatanapaccayā phassa, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakhandhassa samudayo hoti.

Avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho, saṅkharāṇirodhā viññāṇaṇirodho, viññāṇaṇirodhā nāmarūpaṇirodho, nāmarūpaṇirodhā saḷāyatanāṇirodho, saḷāyatanāṇirodhā phassaṇirodho, phassaṇirodhā vedanāṇirodho, vedanāṇirodhā taṇhāṇirodho, taṇhāṇirodhā upādānaṇirodho, upādānaṇirodhā bhavaṇirodho, bhavaṇirodhā jātiṇirodho, jātiṇirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakhandhassa nirodho hoti.

"‘Everything exists’, *Kaccāyana*, is one extreme. ‘Nothing exists’ is the other extreme. Not approaching either of those extremes, *Kaccāyana*, the *Tathāgata* teaches the *Dhamma* by the middle way:

From ignorance as condition, preparations come to be; from preparations as condition, consciousness comes to be; from consciousness as condition, name-and-form comes to be; from name-and-form as condition, the six sense-bases come to be; from the six sense-bases as condition, contact comes to be; from contact as condition, feeling comes to be; from feeling as condition, craving comes to be; from craving as condition, grasping comes to be; from grasping as condition, becoming comes to be; from becoming as condition, birth comes to be; and from birth as condition, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Such is the arising of this entire mass of suffering.

From the complete fading away and cessation of that very ignorance, there comes to be the cessation of preparations; from the cessation of preparations, there comes to be the cessation of consciousness; from the cessation of consciousness, there comes to be the cessation of name-and-form; from the cessation of name-and-form, there comes to be the cessation of the six sense-bases; from the cessation of the six sense-bases,

there comes to be the cessation of contact; from the cessation of contact, there comes to be the cessation of feeling; from the cessation of feeling, there comes to be the cessation of craving; from the cessation of craving, there comes to be the cessation of grasping; from the cessation of grasping, there comes to be the cessation of becoming; from the cessation of becoming, there comes to be the cessation of birth; and from the cessation of birth, there comes to be the cessation of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering."

It is clear from this declaration that in this context the law of dependent arising itself is called the middle path. Some prefer to call this the Buddha's metaphysical middle path, as it avoids both extremes of 'is' and 'is not'. The philosophical implications of the above passage lead to the conclusion that the law of dependent arising enshrines a certain pragmatic principle, which dissolves the antinomial conflict in the world.

It is the insight into this principle that basically distinguishes the noble disciple, who sums it up in the two words *samudayo*, arising, and *nirodho*, ceasing. The arising and ceasing of the world is for him a fact of experience, a knowledge. It is in this light that we have to understand the phrase *aparappaccayā ñāṇam ev'assa ettha hoti*, "herein he has a knowledge that is not dependent on another". In other words, he is not believing in it out of faith in someone, but has understood it experientially. The noble disciple sees the arising and the cessation of the world through his own six sense bases.

In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* there is a verse which presents this idea in a striking manner:

Chasu loko samuppanno,
chasu kubbati santhavaṃ,
channam eva upādāya,
chasu loko vihaññati.cxix[16]

"In the six the world arose,

In the six it holds concourse,

On the six themselves depending,

In the six it has its woes."

The verse seems to say that the world has arisen in the six, that it has associations in the six, and that depending on those very six, the world comes to grief. Though the commentators advance an interpretation of this six, it does not seem to get the sanction of the *sutta* as it is. According to them, the first line speaks of the six internal sense bases, such as the eye, ear and nose.cxx[17] The world is said to arise in these six internal sense bases. The second line is supposed to refer to the six external sense

bases. Again the third line is interpreted with reference to the six internal sense bases, and the fourth line is said to refer to the six external sense bases. In other words, the implication is that the world arises in the six internal sense bases and associates with the six external sense bases, and that it holds on to the six internal sense bases and comes to grief in the six external sense bases.

This interpretation seems to miss the point. Even the grammar does not allow it, for if it is a case of associating ‘with’ the external sense bases, the instrumental case would have been used instead of the locative case, that is, *chahi* instead of *chasu*. On the other hand, the locative *chasu* occurs in all the three lines in question. This makes it implausible that the first two lines are referring to two different groups of sixes. It is more plausible to conclude that the reference is to the six sense bases of contact, *phassāyatana*, which include both the internal and the external. In fact, at least two are necessary for something to be dependently arisen. The world does not arise in the six internal bases in isolation. It is precisely in this fact that the depth of this *Dhamma* is to be seen.

In the *Samudayasutta* of the *Salāyatana* section in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* this aspect of dependent arising is clearly brought out:

Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātīpaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.cxxi[18]

"Dependent on the eye and forms arises eye consciousness; the coming together of the three is contact; with contact as condition, arises feeling; conditioned by feeling, craving; conditioned by craving, grasping; conditioned by grasping, becoming; conditioned by becoming, birth; and conditioned by birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus is the arising of this entire mass of suffering."

Here the *sutta* starts with the arising of contact and branches off towards the standard formula of *paṭicca samuppāda*. Eye consciousness arises dependent on, *paṭicca*, two things, namely eye and forms. And the concurrence of the three is contact. This shows that two are necessary for a thing to be dependently arisen.

So in fairness to the *sutta* version, we have to conclude that the reference in all the four lines is to the bases of contact, comprising both the internal and the external. That is to say, we cannot discriminate between them and assert that the first line refers to one set of six, and the second line refers to another. We are forced to such a conclusion in fairness to the *sutta*.

So from this verse also we can see that according to the usage of the noble ones the world arises in the six sense bases. This fact is quite often expressed by the phrase *ariyassa vinaye loko*, the world in the noble one's discipline.cxxii[19] According to this noble usage, the world is always defined in terms of the six sense bases, as if the world arises because of these six sense bases. This is a very deep idea. All other

teachings in this *Dhamma* will get obscured, if one fails to understand this basic fact, namely how the concept of the world is defined in this mode of noble usage.

This noble usage reveals to us the implications of the expression *udayatthagāminī paññā*, the wisdom that sees the rise and fall. About the noble disciple it is said that he is endowed with the noble penetrative wisdom of seeing the rise and fall, *udayatthagāminiyā paññāya sammanāgato ariyāya nibbhedikāya*.cxxxiii[20] The implication is that this noble wisdom has a penetrative quality about it. This penetration is through the rigidly grasped almost impenetrable encrustation of the two dogmatic views in the world, existence and non-existence.

Now, how does that penetration come about? As already stated in the above quoted *Kaccāyanasutta*, when one sees the arising aspect of the world, one finds it impossible to hold the view that nothing exists in the world. His mind does not incline towards a dogmatic involvement with that view. Similarly, when he sees the cessation of the world through his own six sense bases, he sees no possibility to go to the other extreme view in the world: 'Everything exists'.

The most basic feature of this principle of dependent arising, with its penetrative quality, is the breaking down of the power of the above concepts. It is the very inability to grasp these views dogmatically that is spoken of as the abandonment of the personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*. The ordinary worldling is under the impression that things exist in truth and fact, but the noble disciple, because of his insight into the norm of arising and cessation, understands the arising and ceasing nature of concepts and their essencelessness or insubstantiality.

Another aspect of the same thing, in addition to what has already been said about *nissaya*, is the understanding of the relatedness of this to that, *idappaccayatā*, implicit in the law of dependent arising. In fact, we began our discussion by highlighting the significance of the term *idappaccayatā*.cxxxiv[21] The basic principle involved, is itself often called *paṭicca samuppāda*. "This being, this comes to be, with the arising of this, this arises. This not being, this does not come to be. With the cessation of this, this ceases."

This insight penetrates through those extreme views. It resolves the conflict between them. But how? By removing the very premise on which it rested, and that is that there are two things. Though logicians might come out with the law of identity and the like, according to right view, the very bifurcation itself is the outcome of a wrong view. That is to say, this is only a conjoined pair. In other words, it resolves that conflict by accepting the worldly norm.

Now this is a point well worth considering. In the case of the twelve links of the formula of dependent arising, discovered by the Buddha, there is a relatedness of this to that, *idappaccayatā*. As for instance already illustrated above by the two links birth and decay-and-death.cxxv[22] When birth is there, decay-and-death come to be, with the arising of birth, decay-and-death arise (and so on). The fact that this relatedness itself is the eternal law, is clearly revealed by the following statement of the Buddha in the *Nidānasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*:

*Avijjāpaccayā, bhikkhave, saṅkhārā. Ya tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā, ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, paṭiccasamuppādo.*cxxvi[23] "From ignorance as condition, preparations come to be. That suchness therein, the invariability, the not-otherwiseness, the relatedness of this to that, this, monks, is called dependent arising."

Here the first two links have been taken up to illustrate the principle governing their direct relation. Now let us examine the meaning of the terms used to express that relation. *Tathā* means 'such' or 'thus', and is suggestive of the term *yathābhūtañāṇa-dassana*, the knowledge and vision of things as they are. The correlatives *yathā* and *tathā* express between them the idea of faithfulness to the nature of the world. So *tathatā* asserts the validity of the law of dependent arising, as a norm in accordance with nature. *Avitathatā*, with its double negative, reaffirms that validity to the degree of invariability. *Anaññathatā*, or not-otherwiseness, makes it unchallengeable, as it were. It is a norm beyond contradiction.

When a conjoined pair is accepted as such, there is no conflict between the two. But since this idea can well appear as some sort of a puzzle, we shall try to illustrate it with a simile. Suppose two bulls, a black one and a white one, are bound together at the neck and allowed to graze in the field as a pair. This is sometimes done to prevent them from straying far afield. Now out of the pair, if the white bull pulls towards the stream, while the black one is pulling towards the field, there is a conflict. The conflict is not due to the bondage, at least not necessarily due to the bondage. It is because the two are pulling in two directions. Supposing the two bulls, somehow, accept the fact that they are in bondage and behave amicably. When then the white bull pulls towards the stream, the black one keeps him company with equanimity, though he is not in need of a drink. And when the black bull is grazing, the white bull follows him along with equanimity, though he is not inclined to eat.

Similarly, in this case too, the conflict is resolved by accepting the pair-wise combination as a conjoined pair. That is how the Buddha solved this problem. But still the point of this simile might not be clear enough. So let us come back to the two links, birth and decay-and-death, which we so often dragged in for purposes of clarification. So long as one does not accept the fact that these two links, birth and decay-and-death, are a conjoined pair, one would see between them a conflict. Why? Because one grasps birth as one end, and tries to remove the other end, which one does not like, namely decay-and-death. One is trying to separate birth from decay-and-death. But this happens to be a conjoined pair. "Conditioned by birth, monks, is decay-and-death." This is the word of the Buddha. Birth and decay-and-death are related to each other.

The word *jarā*, or decay, on analysis would make this clear. Usually by *jarā* we mean old age. The word has connotations of senility and decrepitude, but the word implies both growth and decay, as it sets in from the moment of one's birth itself. Only, there is a possible distinction according to the standpoint taken. This question of a standpoint or a point of view is very important at this juncture. This is something one should assimilate with a meditative attention. Let us bring up a simile to make this clear.

Now, for instance, there could be a person who makes his living by selling the leaves of a particular kind of tree. Suppose another man sells the flowers of the same tree, to make his living. And yet another sells the fruits, while a fourth sells the timber. If we line them up and put to them the question, pointing to that tree: 'Is this tree mature enough?', we might sometimes get different answers. Why? Each would voice his own commercial point of view regarding the degree of maturity of the tree. For instance, one who sells flowers would say that the tree is too old, if the flowering stage of the tree is past.

Similarly, the concept of decay or old age can change according to the standpoint taken up. From beginning to end, it is a process of decay. But we create an artificial boundary between youth and old age. This again shows that the two are a pair mutually conjoined. Generally, the worldlings are engaged in an attempt to separate the two in this conjoined pair. Before the Buddha came into the scene, all religious teachers were trying to hold on to birth, while rejecting decay-and-death. But it was a vain struggle. It is like the attempt of the miserly millionaire *Kosiya* to eat rice-cakes alone, to cite another simile.

According to that instructive story, the millionaire *Kosiya*, an extreme miser, once developed a strong desire to eat rice-cakes.^{cxxvii}[24] As he did not wish to share them with anyone else, he climbed up to the topmost storey of his mansion with his wife and got her to cook rice-cakes for him. To teach him a lesson, Venerable *Mahā Moggallāna*, who excelled in psychic powers, went through the air and appeared at the window as if he is on his alms round. *Kosiya*, wishing to dismiss this intruder with a tiny rice-cake, asked his wife to put a little bit of cake dough into the pan. She did so, but it became a big rice-cake through the venerable *thera's* psychic power. Further attempts to make tinier rice-cakes ended up in producing ever bigger and bigger ones. In the end, *Kosiya* thought of dismissing the monk with just one cake, but to his utter dismay, all the cakes got joined to each other to form a string of cakes. The couple then started pulling this string of cakes in either direction with all their might, to separate just one from it. But without success. At last they decided to let go and give up, and offered the entire string of cakes to the venerable *Thera*.

The Buddha's solution to the above problem is a similar let go-ism and giving up. It is a case of giving up all assets, *sabbūpadhipaṭinissagga*. You cannot separate these links from one another. Birth and decay-and-death are intertwined. This is a conjoined pair. So the solution here, is to let go. All those problems are due to taking up a standpoint. Therefore the kind of view sanctioned in this case, is one that leads to detachment and dispassion, one that goes against the tendency to grasp and hold on. It is by grasping and holding on that one comes into conflict with *Māra*.

Now going by the story of the millionaire *Kosiya*, one might think that the Buddha was defeated by *Māra*. But the truth of the matter is that it is *Māra* who suffered defeat by this sort of giving up. It is a very subtle point. *Māra's* forte lies in seizing and grabbing. He is always out to challenge. Sometimes he takes delight in hiding himself to take one by surprise, to drive terror and cause horripilation. So when *Māra* comes round to grab, if we can find some means of foiling his attempt, or make it impossible for him to grab, then *Māra* will have to accept defeat.

Now let us examine the Buddha's solution to this question. There are in the world various means of preventing others from grabbing something we possess. We can either hide our property in an inaccessible place, or adopt security measures, or else we can come to terms and sign a treaty with the enemy. But all these measures can sometimes fail. However, there is one unfailing method, which in principle is bound to succeed. A method that prevents all possibilities of grabbing. And that is - letting go, giving up. When one lets go, there is nothing to grab. In a tug-of-war, when someone is pulling at one end with all his might, if the other suddenly lets go of its hold, one can well imagine the extent of the former's discomfiture, let alone victory. It was such a discomfiture that fell to *Māra's* lot, when the Buddha applied this extraordinary solution. All this goes to show the importance of such terms as *nissaya* and *idappaccayatā* in understanding this *Dhamma*.

We have already taken up the word *nissaya* for comment. Another aspect of its significance is revealed by the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*. Some parts of this *sutta*, though well known, are wonderfully deep. There is a certain thematic paragraph, which occurs at the end of each subsection in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*. For instance, in the section on the contemplation relating to body, *kāyānupassanā*, we find the following paragraph:

Iti ajjhataṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, ajjhatabahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati; samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati, vāyadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati, samudayavāyadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati; 'atthi kāyo'ti vā pan'assa sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti, yāvadeva nāṇamattāya paṭissatimattāya; anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati.cxxviii[25]

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body externally, or he abides contemplating the body as a body internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating the arising nature in the body, or he abides contemplating the dissolving nature in the body, or he abides contemplating the arising and dissolving nature in the body. Or else the mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him only to the extent necessary for just knowledge and further mindfulness. And he abides independent and does not cling to anything in the world."

A similar paragraph occurs throughout the *sutta* under all the four contemplations, body, feeling, mind and mind objects. As a matter of fact, it is this paragraph that is called *satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*, or meditation on the foundation of mindfulness.cxxix[26] The preamble to this paragraph introduces the foundation itself, or the setting up of mindfulness as such. The above paragraph, on the other hand, deals with what pertains to insight. It is the field of insight proper. If we examine this paragraph, here too we will find a set of conjoined or twin terms:

"In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally", and then: "he abides contemplating the body both internally and externally." Similarly: "He abides contemplating the arising nature in the body, or he abides contemplating the dissolving nature in the body", and then: "he abides contemplating both the arising and dissolving nature in the body."

"Or else the mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him only to the extent necessary for knowledge and remembrance." This means that for the meditator even the idea 'there is a body', that remembrance, is there just for the purpose of further development of knowledge and mindfulness.

"And he abides independent and does not cling to anything in the world." Here too, the word used is *anissita*, independent, or not leaning towards anything. He does not cling to anything in the world. The word *nissaya* says something more than grasping. It means 'leaning on' or 'associating'.

This particular thematic paragraph in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* is of paramount importance for insight meditation. Here, too, there is the mention of internal, *ajjhatta*, and external, *bahiddhā*. When one directs one's attention to one's own body and another's body separately, one might sometimes take these two concepts, internal and external, too seriously with a dogmatic attitude. One might think that there is actually something that could be called one's own or another's. But then the mode of attention next mentioned unifies the two, as internal-external, *ajjhatabhiddhā*, and presents them like the conjoined pair of bulls. And what does it signify? These two are not to be viewed as two extremes, they are related to each other.

Now let us go a little deeper into this interrelation. The farthest limit of the internal is the nearest limit of the external. The farthest limit of the external is the nearest limit of the internal. More strictly rendered, *ajjhatta* means inward and *bahiddhā* means outward. So here we have the duality of an inside and an outside. One might think that the word *ajjhattika* refers to whatever is organic. Nowadays many people take in artificial parts into their bodies. But once acquired, they too become internal. That is why, in this context *ajjhattika* has a deeper significance than its usual rendering as 'one's own'.

Whatever it may be, the farthest limit of the *ajjhatta* remains the nearest limit of the *bahiddhā*. Whatever portion one demarcates as one's own, just adjoining it and at its very gate is *bahiddhā*. And from the point of view of *bahiddhā*, its farthest limit and at its periphery is *ajjhatta*. This is a conjoined pair. These two are interrelated. So the implication is that these two are not opposed to each other. That is why, by attending to them both together, as *ajjhatabhiddhā*, that dogmatic involvement with a view is abandoned. Here we have an element of reconciliation, which prevents adherence to a view. This is what fosters the attitude of *anissita*, unattached.

So the two, *ajjhatta* and *bahiddhā*, are neighbours. Inside and outside as concepts are neighbours to each other. It is the same as in the case of arising and ceasing, mentioned above. This fact has already been revealed to some extent by the *Kaccāyanagottasutta*.

Now if we go for an illustration, we have the word *udaya* at hand in *samudaya*. Quite often this word is contrasted with *atthagama*, going down, in the expression *udayatthagaminī paññā*, the wisdom that sees the rise and fall. We can regard these two as words borrowed from everyday life. *Udaya* means sunrise, and *atthagama* is sunset. If we take this itself as an illustration, the farthest limit of the forenoon is the nearest limit of the afternoon. The farthest limit of the afternoon is the nearest limit of the forenoon. And here again we see a case of neighbourhood. When one understands

the neighbourly nature of the terms *udaya* and *atthagama*, or *samudaya* and *vaya*, and regards them as interrelated by the principle of *idappaccayatā*, one penetrates them both by that mode of contemplating the rise and fall of the body together, *samudaya-vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmīṃ viharati*, and develops a penetrative insight.

What comes next in the *satipaṭṭhāna* passage, is the outcome or net result of that insight. "The mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him only to the extent necessary for pure knowledge and further mindfulness", '*atthi kāyo'ti vā pan'assa sati pacupaṭṭhitā hoti, yāvadeva nāṇamattāya paṭissatimattāya*. At that moment one does not take even the concept of body seriously. Even the mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in that meditator only for the sake of, *yavadeva*, clarity of knowledge and accomplishment of mindfulness. The last sentence brings out the net result of that way of developing insight: "He abides independent and does not cling to anything in the world."

Not only in the section on the contemplation of the body, but also in the sections on feelings, mind, and mind objects in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, we find this mode of insight development. None of the objects, taken up for the foundation of mindfulness, is to be grasped tenaciously. Only their rise and fall is discerned. So it seems that, what is found in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, is a group of concepts. These concepts serve only as a scaffolding for the systematic development of mindfulness and knowledge. The Buddha often compared his *Dhamma* to a raft: *nīttaraṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya*, "for crossing over and not for holding on to".cxxx[27] Accordingly, what we have here are so many scaffoldings for the up-building of mindfulness and knowledge.

Probably due to the lack of understanding of this deep philosophy enshrined in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, many sects of Buddhism took up these concepts in a spirit of dogmatic adherence. That dogmatic attitude of clinging on is like the attempt to cling on to the scaffoldings and to live on in them. So with reference to the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* also, we can understand the importance of the term *nissaya*.

Nibbana Sermons - Part 5

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

Etaṃ santam, etaṃ paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam.cxxxii[1]

"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.

Towards the end of our last sermon, we discussed, to some extent, a special mode of attention, regarding the four objects of contemplation in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* - body, feelings, mind, and mind-objects.cxxxii[2] That discussion might have revealed a certain middle path indicated by the Buddha.

We drew attention to a thematic paragraph, occurring throughout the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, which outlines a method of using objects and concepts for *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation without dogmatic involvement. This leads the meditator to a particular kind of attitude, summed up by the concluding phrase: "He abides independent and does not cling to anything in the world", *anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*.cxxxiii[3]

By way of clarification, we brought in the simile of a scaffolding for a building, that here the concepts only serve as a scaffolding for building up mindfulness and knowledge.cxxxiv[4] Talking about the scaffolding, we are reminded of two different attitudes, namely, the attitude of leaning on to and dwelling in the scaffolding itself, and the enlightened attitude of merely utilizing it for the purpose of erecting a building.

For further explanation of this technique, we may take up the two terms *parāmasana* and *sammasana*. It might be better to distinguish the meanings of these two terms also with the help of a simile. As for a simile, let us take up the razor, which is such a useful requisite in our meditative life. There is a certain special way in sharpening a razor. With the idea of sharpening the razor, if one grabs it tightly and rubs it on the sharpening stone, it will only become blunt. *Parāmasana*, grasping, grabbing, is something like that.

What then is the alternative? A more refined and softer approach is required as meant by the term *sammasana*. There is a proper mode of doing it. One has to hold the razor in a relaxed way, as if one is going to throw it away. One holds it lightly, ready to let go of it at any time. But, of course, with mindfulness. The wrist, also, is not rigid, but relaxed. Hand is supple at the joints and easy to swing. Then with that readiness, one sharpens the razor, sliding it smoothly on the stone. First: up, up, up, then: down, down, down, and then: up down, up down, up down. The third combined movement ensures that those parts of the blade still untouched by the stone will also get duly sharpened.

It is in the same manner that the razor of insight wisdom has to be whetted on the sharpening stone of the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*. Inward, inward, inward - outward, outward, outward - inward outward, inward outward. Or else: arising, arising, arising - ceasing, ceasing, ceasing - arising ceasing, arising ceasing.

This is an illustration for the method of reflection, or *sammasana*, introduced by the Buddha in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*. Words and concepts have to be made use of, for attaining *Nibbāna*. But here the aim is only the up-building of mindfulness and knowledge. Once their purpose is served, they can be dismantled without being a bother to the mind. This is the significance of the concluding phrase "He abides independent and does not cling to anything in the world". cxxxv[5]

There is another *sutta* in which the Buddha has touched upon this same point in particular. It is the *Samudayasutta* in the *Satipaṭṭhānasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*.cxxxvi[6] In that *sutta*, the Buddha has proclaimed the arising and the going down of the four foundations of mindfulness. He begins by saying: "Monks, I shall teach you the arising and the going down of the four foundations of mindfulness". *Catunnaṃ, bhikkhave, satipaṭṭhānaṃ samudayaṃca atthagamaṃca desessāmi*.

He goes on to say: "What, monks, is the arising of the body? With the arising of nutriment is the arising of the body and with the cessation of the nutriment is the going down of the body." *Ko ca, bhikkhave, kāyassa samudayo? Āhārasamudayā kāyassa samudayo, āhāranirodhā kāyassa atthagamo*.

Similarly: "With the arising of contact is the arising of feeling, and with the cessation of contact is the going down of feeling". *Phassasamudayā vedanānaṃ samudayo, phassanirodhā vedanānaṃ atthagamo.*

And then: "With the arising of name-and-form is the arising of the mind, and with the cessation of name-and-form is the going down of the mind". *Nāmarūpasamudayā cittassa samudayo, nāmarūpanirodhā cittassa atthagamo.*

And lastly: "With the arising of attention is the arising of mind-objects, and with the ceasing of attention is the going down of mind-objects". *Manasikārasamudayā dhammānaṃ samudayo, manasikāranirodhā dhammānaṃ atthagamo.*

This, too, is an important discourse, well worth remembering, because here the Buddha is dealing with the arising and cessation, or arising and going down, of the four objects used for establishing mindfulness.

As we know, the concept of nutriment in this *Dhamma* is much broader than the worldly concept of food. It does not imply merely the ordinary food, for which the term used is *kabalīkārahāra*, or material food. Taken in a deeper sense, it includes the other three kinds of nutriment as well, namely *phassa*, or contact, *manosañcetanā*, or volition, and *viññāṇa*, or consciousness. These four together account for the concept of body as such. Therefore, due to these four there comes to be a body, and with their cessation the body ends. So also in the case of feeling. We all know that the arising of feeling is due to contact.

The reference to name-and-form in this context might not be clear enough at once, due to various definitions of name-and-form, or *nāma-rūpa*. Here, the reason for the arising of the mind is said to be name-and-form. Mind is said to arise because of name-and-form, and it is supposed to go down with the cessation of name-and-form.

The fact that the mind-objects arise due to attention is noteworthy. All the mind-objects mentioned in the fourth section of contemplation arise when there is attention. And they go down when attention is not there. In other words, attending makes objects out of them. This way, we are reminded that, apart from making use of these words and concepts for the purpose of attaining *Nibbāna*, there is nothing worth holding on to or clinging to dogmatically. So if a meditator works with this aim in mind, he will be assured of a state of mind that is independent and clinging-free, *anissita, anupādāna*.

One marvellous quality of the Buddha's teaching emerges from this discussion. A mind-object is something that the mind hangs on to as the connotations of the word *ārammaṇa* (cp. *ālam bhana*) suggest. But because of the mode of insight wisdom outlined here, because of the middle path approach, even the tendency to 'hang-on' is finally done away with and the object is penetrated through. Despite the above connotations of 'hanging on' (*ārammaṇa*), the object is transcended. Transcendence in its highest sense is not a case of surpassing, as is ordinarily understood. Instead of leaving behind, it penetrates through. Here then, we have a transcendence that is in itself a penetration.

So the terms *anissita* and *anupādāna* seem to have a significance of their own. More of it comes to light in quite a number of other *suttas*. Particularly in the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* we come across the following two verses, which throw more light on these two terms:

Anissito na calati,

nissito ca upādiyaṃ,

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ,

saṃsāraṃ nātivattati.

Etam ādīnavaṃ ñatvā,

nissayesu mahabbhayaṃ,

anissito anupādāno,

sato bhikkhu paribbaje.cxxxvii[7]

"The unattached one wavers not, but the one attached, clinging on, does not get beyond *saṃsāra*, which is an alternation between a this-ness and an otherwise-ness (*itthabhāvaññathābhāva*). Knowing this peril, the great danger, in attachments or supports (*nissayesu*), let the monk fare along mindfully, resting on nothing, clinging to nothing."

Caught up in the dichotomy of *saṃsāric* existence, which alternates between this-ness and otherwise-ness, one is unable to transcend it, so long as there is attachment and clinging. *Nissayas* are the supports that encourage clinging in the form of dogmatic adherence to views. Seeing the peril and the danger in them, a mindful monk has no recourse to them. This gives one an idea of the attitude of an *arahant*. His mind is free from enslavement to the conjoined pairs of relative concepts.

This fact is borne out by certain Canonical statements, which at first sight might appear as riddles. The two last sections of the *Sutta Nipāta*, the *Aṭṭhakavagga* and the *Pārāyanavagga* in particular, contain verses which are extremely deep. In the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, one often comes across apparently contradictory pairs of terms, side by side. About the *arahant* it is said that: "he neither grasps nor gives up", *nādeti na nirassati.cxxxviii[8]* "There is nothing taken up or rejected by him", *attaṃ nirattaṃ na hi tassa atthi.cxxxix[9]*

By the way, the word *attaṃ* in this context is derived from *ādātta* (*ā + dā*), by syncopation. It should not be mistaken as a reference to *attā*, or soul. Similarly, *niratta* is from *as*, to throw, *nirasta*, conveying the idea of giving up or putting down.

There is nothing taken up or given up by the *arahant*. Other such references to the *arahant's* attitude are: *Na rāgarāgī na virāgaratto*, "he is neither attached to attachment, nor attached to detachment".cxl[10] *Na hi so rajjati no virajjati*, "He is neither attached nor detached".cxli[11]

It is in order to explain why such references are used that we took all this trouble to discuss at length the significance of such terms as *nissaya.cxlii[12]* Probably due to a lack of understanding in this respect, the deeper meanings of such *suttas* have got obscured. Not only that, even textual corruption through distorted variant readings has set in, because they appeared like riddles. However, the deeper sense of these *suttas* sometimes emerges from certain strikingly strange statements like the following found in the *Khajjanīyasutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. The reference here is to the *arahant*.

Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhikkhu neva ācināti na apacināti, apacinitvā ṭhito neva pajahati na upādiyati, pajahitvā ṭhito neva viseneti na usseneti, visenetvā ṭhito neva vidhūpeti na sandhūpeti.cxlili[13] "Monks, such a monk is called one who neither amasses nor dimin-

ishes; already diminished as he is, he neither gives up nor grasps; already given up as he is, he neither disbands nor binds together; already disbanded as he is, he neither exorcizes nor proficiates."

Even to one who does not understand the language, the above quotation would sound enigmatic. Even the rendering of the terms used here is not an easy matter, because of the nuances they seem to convey. We could perhaps say that such a monk neither amasses or accumulates, nor diminishes. Since he is already diminished, presumably as regards the five aggregates, he neither abandons nor grasps anew. Since the giving up is complete, he neither binds together or enlists (note the word *senā*, army), nor disbands. Disbanding (if not 'disarmament'), being complete, there is neither exorcizing or smoking out, nor proficiating or inviting. The coupling of these terms and their peculiar employment is suggestive of the *arahant's* freedom from the dichotomy.

In the *Brāhmaṇavagga* of the *Dhammapada* too, we come across a similar enigmatic verse:

*Yassa pāraṃ apāraṃ vā,
pārāpāraṃ na vijjati,
vītaddaraṃ viṣaṃyuttaṃ,
tam ahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ.* cxliv[14]

"For whom there is neither a farther shore,
Nor a hither shore, nor both,
Who is undistressed and unfettered,
Him I call a Brahmin."

In this context the word *brāhmaṇa* refers to the *arahant*. Here too, it is said that the *arahant* has neither a farther shore, nor a hither shore, nor both. This might sometimes appear as a problem. Our usual concept of an *arahant* is of one who has crossed over the ocean of *saṃsāra* and is standing on the other shore. But here is something enigmatic.

We come across a similar *sutta* in the *Sutta Nipāta* also, namely its very first, the *Uragasutta*. The extraordinary feature of this *sutta* is the recurrence of the same refrain throughout its seventeen verses. The refrain is:

*So bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ,
urago jīṇṇamiva tacaṃ purāṇaṃ.* cxlv[15]

"That monk forsakes the hither and the tither,
Like a snake its slough that doth wither".

This simile of the slough, or the worn-out skin of the snake, is highly significant. To quote one instance:

Yo nājjhagamā bhavesu sāraṃ,
vicinaṃ pupphamiva udumbaresu,
so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ,
urago jīṇṇamiva tacam purāṇaṃ.cxlvi[16]

"That monk who sees no essence in existence,
Like one seeking flowers in *Udumbara* trees,
Will give up the hither as well as the thither,
Like the snake its slough that doth wither".

The *arahant* has abandoned his attachment to existence. As such, he is free from the bondage of those conjoined terms in worldly usage. So the *arahant* looks at the worldly usage in the same way as a snake would turn back and look at the worn-out skin he has sloughed off. Sometimes we see a snake moving about with a remnant of its slough hanging on. We might even think that the snake is carrying its slough around. It is the same in the case of the *arahants*.

Now there is this term *sa-upādisesa Nibbāna dhātu*. Taking the term at its face value, some might think that the clinging is not yet over for the *arahants* - that there is still a little bit left. The *arahant*, though he has attained release and realized *Nibbāna*, so long as he is living in the world, has to relate to the external objects in the world somehow through his five senses, making use of them. Seeing it, some might conclude that it is because of some residual clinging. But we have to understand this in the light of the simile of the worn-out skin. In the case of the *arahant*, too, the sloughed off skin is still hanging on.

As a sidelight we may cite a remark of Venerable *Sāriputta: Iminā pūtikāyena aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi jigucchāmi.cxlvii[17]* "I am harassed and repelled by this body, I am ashamed of it". This is because the body is for him something already abandoned. All this goes to show that the *arahant* has an unattached, unclinging attitude.

Linguistic usage, which is a special feature of existence, is enlivened by the cravings, conceits, and views with which it is grasped. Worldlings thrive on it, whereas the *arahants* are free from it. This is the upshot of the above discussion on the terms *anusaya* and *nissaya.cxlviii[18]*

Yet another important term that should receive attention in any discussion on *Nibbāna* is *āsava*. This is because the *arahant* is often called a *khīṇāsava*, one whose *āsavas* are extinct.cxlix[19] *Āsavakkhayo*, extinction of *āsavas*, is an epithet of *Nibbāna.cl[20]* So the distinct feature of an *arahant* is his extinction of *āsavas*.

Now, what does *āsava* mean? In ordinary life, this word is used to denote fermentation or liquor that has got fermented for a long time.cli[21] If there is even a dreg of ferment in a vessel, it is enough to cause fermentation for any suitable raw material put into it. So also are the *āsavas*. They are like the residual dregs of the ebullient mass of defilements in beings, which have undergone fermentation for a long, long time in *samsāra*.

Very often, *āsavas* are said to be of three kinds, as *kāmāsavā*, *bhavāsavā*, and *avijjāsavā*. The term *āsava* in this context is usually rendered as ‘influxes’. We may understand them as certain intoxicating influences, which create a world of sense-desires, a stupor that gives a notion of existence and leads to ignorance. These influxes are often said to have the nature of infiltrating into the mind. Sometimes a fourth type of influxes, *diṭṭhāsavā*, is also mentioned. But this can conveniently be subsumed under *avijjāsavā*.

The extinction of influxes becomes a distinctive characteristic of an *arahant*, as it ensures complete freedom. One could be said to have attained complete freedom only if one’s mind is free from these influxes. It is because these influxes are capable of creating intoxication again and again.

The immense importance of the extinction of influxes, and how it accounts for the worthiness of an *arahant*, is sometimes clearly brought out. The ultimate aim of the Buddha’s teaching is one that in other systems of thought is generally regarded as attainable only after death. The Buddha, on the other hand, showed a way to its realization here and now.

As a matter of fact, even brahmins like *Pokkharasāti* went about saying that it is impossible for a human being to attain something supramundane: *Katham’hi nāma manussabhūto uttarimanussadhammā alamariyañāṇadassanavisesaṃ ñassati vā dakkhati vā sacchi vā karissati?* clii[22] "How can one as a human being know or see or realize a supramundane state, an extraordinary knowledge and vision befitting the noble ones?" They thought that such a realization is possible only after death. Immortality, in other systems of thought, is always an after death experience.

Now the realization of the extinction of influxes, on the other hand, gives a certain assurance about the future. It is by this extinction of influxes that one wins to the certitude that there is no more birth after this. *Khīṇā jāti*, cliii[23] extinct is birth! Certitude about something comes only with realization. In fact, the term *sacchikiriya* implies a seeing with one’s own eyes, as the word for eye, *akṣi*, is implicit in it.

However, everything cannot be verified by seeing with one’s own eyes. The Buddha has pointed out that there are four ways of realization or verification:

Cattāro me, bhikkhave, sacchikaraṇīyā dhammā. Katame cattaro? Atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā kāyena sacchikaraṇīyā; atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā satiyā sacchikaraṇīyā; atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā cakkhunā sacchikaraṇīyā; atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā paññāya sacchikaraṇīyā. clii[24]

"Monks, there are these four realizable things. What four? There are things, monks, that are realizable through the body; there are things, monks, that are realizable through memory; there are things, monks, that are realizable through the eye; there are things, monks, that are realizable through wisdom."

By way of explanation, the Buddha says that the things realizable through the body are the eight deliverances, the things realizable through memory are one’s former habitations, the things realizable through the eye are the death and rebirth of beings, and what is realizable through wisdom, is the extinction of influxes.

One’s former lives cannot be seen with one’s own eyes by running into the past. It is possible only by purifying one’s memory and directing it backwards. Similarly, the death and rebirth of beings can be seen, as if with one’s fleshly eye, by the divine eye, by those who have developed it. So also the fact of extirpating all influxes is to be realized by wisdom, and

not by any other means. The fact that the influxes of sensuality, existence, ignorance, and views, will not flow in again, can be verified only by wisdom. That is why special mention is made of *Nibbāna* as something realizable.clv[25]

Because *Nibbāna* is said to be something realizable, some are of the opinion that nothing should be predicated about it. What is the reason for this special emphasis on its realizability? It is to bring into sharp relief the point of divergence, since the Buddha taught a way of realizing here and now something that in other religions was considered impossible.

What was it that they regarded impossible to be realized? The cessation of existence, or *bhavanirodha*. How can one be certain here and now that this existence has ceased? This might sometimes appear as a big puzzle. But all the same, the *arahant* experiences the cessation of existence as a realization. That is why he even gives expression to it as: *Bhavanirodho Nibbānaṃ*.clvi[26] "cessation of existence is *Nibbāna*".

It comes about by this extinction of influxes. The very existence of 'existence' is especially due to the flowing in of influxes of existence. What is called 'existence' is not the apparent process of existing visible to others. It is something that pertains to one's own mental continuum.

For instance, when it is said that some person is in the world of sense desires, one might sometimes imagine it as living surrounded by objects of sense pleasure. But that is not always the case. It is the existence in a world of sense desires, built up by sensuous thoughts. It is the same with the realms of form and formless realms. Even those realms can be experienced and attained while living in this world itself.

Similarly, it is possible for one to realize the complete cessation of this existence while living in this very world. It is accomplished by winning to the realization that the influxes of sense desires, existence, and ignorance, no longer influence one's mind.

So all this goes to show the high degree of importance attached to the word *āsava*. The *Sammādiṭṭhisutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* seems to pose a problem regarding the significance of this term. At one place in the *sutta* it is said that the arising of ignorance is due to the arising of influxes and that the cessation of ignorance is due to the cessation of influxes: *Āsavasamudayā avijjāsamudayo, āsavanirodhā avijjānirodho*.clvii[27]

If the *sutta* says only this much, it will not be such a problem, because it appears as a puzzle to many nowadays, why ignorance is placed first. Various reasons are adduced and arguments put forward as to why it is stated first out of the twelve factors. The fact that there is still something to precede it could therefore be some consolation.

But then, a little way off, in the selfsame *sutta*, we read: *Avijjāsamudayā āsavasamudayo, avijjānirodhā āsavanirodho*, clviii[28] "with the arising of ignorance is the arising of influxes, with the cessation of ignorance is the cessation of influxes". Apparently this contradicts the previous statement. The preacher of this discourse, Venerable *Sāriputta*, is not one who contradicts himself. So most probably there is some deep reason behind this.

Another problem crops up, since ignorance is also counted among the different kinds of influxes. This makes our puzzle all the more deep. But this state of affairs could best be understood with the help of an illustration. It is in order to explain a certain fascinating behaviour of the mind that even *arahants* of great wisdom had to make seemingly contradictory statements.

We have to draw in at this juncture a very important discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which is a marvel in itself. It comes in the section on the aggregates, *Khandhasamyutta*, as the second *Gaddulasutta*. Here the Buddha makes the following impressive declaration:

‘Diṭṭhaṃ vo, bhikkhave, caraṇaṃ nāma cittaṃ’ti?’ ‘Evaṃ, bhante.’ ‘Tampi kho, bhikkhave, caraṇaṃ nāma cittaṃ citteneva cintitaṃ. Tenapi kho, bhikkhave, caraṇena cittaṃ cittaṃñeva cittataraṃ. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, abhikkhaṇaṃ sakaṃ cittaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ: Dīgharattam idaṃ cittaṃ saṃkiliṭṭhaṃ rāgena dosena mohenā’ti. Cittasaṃkilesā, bhikkhave, sattā saṃkilissanti, cittavodānā sattā visujjhanti.

Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, aññaṃ ekanikāyampi samanupassāmi evaṃ cittaṃ, yathayidaṃ, bhikkhave, tiracchānagatā pāṇā. Tepi kho, bhikkhave, tiracchānagatā pāṇā citteneva cintitā. Tehipi kho, bhikkhave, tiracchānagatehi pāṇehi cittaṃñeva cittataraṃ. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, bhikkhunā abhikkhaṇaṃ sakaṃ cittaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ: Dīgharattam idaṃ cittaṃ saṃkiliṭṭhaṃ rāgena dosena mohenā’ti. Cittasaṃkilesā, bhikkhave, sattā saṃkilissanti, cittavodānā sattā visujjhanti.’ clix[29]

"‘Monks, have you seen a picture called a movie (*carāṇa*)?’ ‘Yes, Lord.’ ‘Monks, even that picture called a movie is something thought out by the mind. But this mind, monks, is more picturesque than that picture called a movie. Therefore, monks, you should reflect moment to moment on your own mind with the thought: For a long time has this mind been defiled by lust, hate, and delusion. By the defilement of the mind, monks, are beings defiled. By the purification of the mind, are beings purified.

Monks, I do not see any other class of beings as picturesque as beings in the animal realm. But those beings in the animal realm, monks, are also thought out by the mind. And the mind, monks, is far more picturesque than those beings in the animal realm. Therefore, monks, should a monk reflect moment to moment on one’s own mind with the thought: For a long time has this mind been defiled by lust, hate, and delusion. By the defilement of the mind, monks, are beings defiled. By the purification of the mind, are beings purified."

Here the Buddha gives two illustrations to show how marvellous this mind is. First he asks the monks whether they have seen a picture called *carāṇa*. Though the word may be rendered by movie, it is not a motion picture of the sort we have today. According to the commentary, it is some kind of variegated painting done on a mobile canvas-chamber, illustrative of the results of good and evil karma.clx[30] Whatever it may be, it seems to have been something marvellous. But far more marvellous, according to the Buddha, is this mind. The reason given is that even such a picture is something thought out by the mind.

Then, by way of an advice to the monks, says the Buddha: ‘Therefore, monks, you should reflect on your mind moment to moment with the thought: For a long time this mind has been defiled by lust, hate, and delusion.’ The moral drawn is that beings are defiled by the defilement of their minds and that they are purified by the purification of their minds. This is the illustration by the simile of the picture.

And then the Buddha goes on to make another significant declaration: ‘Monks, I do not see any other class of beings as picturesque as beings in the animal realm.’ But since those beings also are thought out by the mind, he declares that the mind is far more picturesque than them. Based on this conclusion, he repeats the same advice as before.

At first sight the *sutta*, when it refers to a picture, seems to be speaking about the man who drew it. But there is something deeper than that. When the Buddha says that the picture called *carāṇa* is also something thought out by the mind, he is not simply stating the fact that the

artist drew it after thinking it out with his mind. The reference is rather to the mind of the one who sees it. He, who sees it, regards it as something marvellous. He creates a picture out of it. He imagines something picturesque in it.

In fact, the allusion is not to the artist's mind, but to the spectator's mind. It is on account of the three defilements lust, hate, and delusion, nurtured in his mind for a long time, that he is able to appreciate and enjoy that picture. Such is the nature of those influxes.

That is why the Buddha declared that this mind is far more picturesque than the picture in question. So if one turns back to look at one's own mind, in accordance with the Buddha's advice, it will be a wonderful experience, like watching a movie. Why? Because reflection reveals the most marvellous sight in the world.

But usually one does not like to reflect, because one has to turn back to do so. One is generally inclined to look at the thing in front. However, the Buddha advises us to turn back and look at one's own mind every moment. Why? Because the mind is more marvellous than that picture called *caraṇa*, or movie.

It is the same declaration that he makes with reference to the beings in the animal realm. When one comes to think about it, there is even less room for doubt here, than in the case of the picture. First of all, the Buddha declares that there is no class of beings more picturesque than those in the animal realm. But he follows it up with the statement that even those beings are thought out by the mind, to draw the conclusion that as such the mind is more picturesque than those beings of the animal realm.

Let us try to sort out the point of this declaration. Generally, we may agree that beings in the animal realm are the most picturesque. We sometimes say that the butterfly is beautiful. But we might hesitate to call a blue fly beautiful. The tiger is fierce, but the cat is not. Here one's personal attitude accounts much for the concepts of beauty, ugliness, fierceness, and innocence of animals. It is because of the defiling influence of influxes, such as ignorance, that the world around us appears so picturesque.

Based on this particular *sutta*, with its reference to the *caraṇa* picture as a prototype, we may take a peep at the modern day's movie film, by way of an analogy. It might facilitate the understanding of the teachings on *paṭicca samuppāda* and *Nibbāna* in a way that is closer to our everyday life. The principles governing the film and the drama are part and parcel of the life outside cinema and the theatre. But since it is generally difficult to grasp them in the context of the life outside, we shall now try to elucidate them with reference to the cinema and the theatre.

Usually a film or a drama is shown at night. The reason for it is the presence of darkness. This darkness helps to bring out the darkness of ignorance that dwells in the minds of beings. So the film as well as the drama is presented to the public within a framework of darkness. If a film is shown at day time, as a matinee show, it necessitates closed windows and dark curtains. In this way, films and dramas are shown within a curtained enclosure.

There is another strange thing about these films and dramas. One goes to the cinema or the theatre saying: "I am going to see a film show, I am going to see a drama". And one returns saying: "I have seen a film show, I have seen a drama". But while the film show or the drama is going on, one forgets that one is seeing a show or a drama.

Such a strange spell of delusion takes over. This is due to the intoxicating influence of influxes. If one wishes to enjoy a film show or a drama, one should be prepared to get intoxicated by it. Otherwise it will cease to be a film show or a drama for him.

What do the film producers and dramatists do? They prepare the background for eliciting the influxes of ignorance, latent in the minds of the audience. That is why such shows and performances are held at night, or else dark curtains are employed. They have an intricate job to do. Within the framework of darkness, they have to create a delusion in the minds of their audience, so as to enact some story in a realistic manner.

To be successful, a film or a drama has to be given a touch of realism. Though fictitious, it should be apparently real for the audience. There is an element of deception involved, a hood-wink. For this touch of realism, quite a lot of make-up on the part of actors and actresses is necessary. As a matter of fact, in the ancient Indian society, one of the primary senses of the word *saṅkhāra* was the make-up done by actors and actresses.

Now in the present context, *saṅkhāra* can include not only this make-up in personal appearance, but also the acting itself, the delineation of character, stage-craft etc.. In this way, the film producers and dramatists create a suitable environment, making use of the darkness and the make-up contrivances. These are the *saṅkhāras*, or the 'preparations'.

However, to be more precise, it is the audience that make preparations, in the last analysis. Here too, as before, we are compelled to make a statement that might appear strange: So far not a single cinema has held a film show and not a single theatre has staged a drama.

And yet, those who had gone to the cinema and the theatre had seen film shows and dramas. Now, how can that be? Usually, we think that it is the film producer who produced the film and that it is the dramatist who made the drama.

But if we are to understand the deeper implications of what the Buddha declared, with reference to the picture *caraṇa*, a film show or drama is produced, in the last analysis, by the spectator himself. When he goes to the cinema and the theatre, he takes with him the spices needed to concoct a film or a drama, and that is: the influxes, or *āsavas*. Whatever technical defects and shortcomings there are in them, he makes good with his influxes.

As we know, in a drama there is a certain interval between two scenes. But the average audience is able to appreciate even such a drama, because they are influenced by the influxes of sense desire, existence, and ignorance.

With the progress in science and technology, scenes are made to fall on the screen with extreme rapidity. All the same, the element of delusion is still there. The purpose is to create the necessary environment for arousing delusion in the minds of the audience. Whatever preparations others may make, if the audience does not respond with their own preparations along the same lines, the drama will not be a success. But in general, the worldlings have a tendency to prepare and concoct, so they would make up for any shortcomings in the film or the drama with their own preparations and enjoy them.

Now, for instance, let us think of an occasion when a film show is going on within the framework of darkness. In the case of a matinee show, doors and windows will have to be closed. Supposing the doors are suddenly flung open, while a vivid technicolour scene is flashing on the screen, what happens then? The spectators will find themselves suddenly thrown out of the cinema world they had created for themselves. Why? Because the scene in

technicolour has now lost its colour. It has faded away. The result is dejection, disenchantment. The film show loses its significance.

That film show owed its existence to the dark framework of ignorance and the force of preparations. But now that the framework has broken down, such a vast change has come over, resulting in a disenchantment. Now the word *rāga* has a nuance suggestive of colour, so *virāga*, dispassion, can also literally mean a fading away or a decolouration. Here we have a possible instance of *nibbidā virāga*, disenchantment, dispassion, at least in a limited sense.

A door suddenly flung open can push aside the delusion, at least temporarily. Let us consider the implications of this little event. The film show, in this case, ceases to be a film show because of a flash of light coming from outside. Now, what would have happened if this flash of light had come from within - from within one's mind? Then also something similar would have happened. If the light of wisdom dawns on one's mind while watching a film show or a drama, one would even wonder whether it is actually a film or a drama, while others are enjoying it.

Speaking about the film show, we mentioned above that the spectator has entered into a world of his own creation. If we are to analyse this situation according to the law of dependent origination, we may add that in fact he has a consciousness and a name-and-form in line with the events of the story, based on the preparations in the midst of the darkness of ignorance. With all his experiences in seeing the film show, he is building up his five aggregates.

Therefore, when the light of wisdom comes and dispels the darkness of ignorance, a similar event can occur. One will come out of that plane of existence. One will step out of the world of sense desires, at least temporarily.

Now, with regard to the *arahants*, too, the same trend of events holds good. When their ignorance ceases, leaving no residue, *avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā*, exhausting the influxes as well, preparations also cease. Why? Because the preparations owe their existence to ignorance. They have the ability to prepare so long as there is ignorance. *Saṅkhāra* generally means preparations. It is the make-up and the make-believe which accounted for the delusion. The darkness of ignorance provided the setting for it. If somehow or other, the light of wisdom enters the scene, those preparations, *saṅkhāra*, became no-preparations, *visaṅkhāra*, and the prepared, *saṅkhata*, becomes a non-prepared, *asaṅkhata*.

So what was true with regard to the film show, is also true, in a deeper sense, with regard to the events leading up to the attainment of *arahant*-hood. With the dawn of that light of wisdom, the preparations, or *saṅkhāra*, lose their significance and become *visaṅkhāra*.

Though for the world outside they appear as preparations, for the *arahant* they are not preparations, because they do not prepare a *bhava*, or existence, for him. They are made ineffective. Similarly, the prepared or the made-up, when it is understood as something prepared or made-up, becomes an un-prepared or an un-made. There is a subtle principle of un-doing involved in this.

Sometimes, this might be regarded as a modernistic interpretation. But there is Canonical evidence in support of such an interpretation. For instance, in the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, we come across the following verse:

Nivutānaṃ tamo hoti,

*andhakāro apassataṃ,
satañca vivaṭaṃ hoti,
āloko passatāmiva,
santike na vijānanti,
magā dhammassa akovidā.clxi[31]*

"Murk it is to those enveloped,
As darkness unto the undiscerning,
But to the good wide ope' it is,
As light is unto those discerning,
So near, and yet they know not,
Fools, unskilled in the Norm."

It is all murky to those enveloped by the hindrance of ignorance, like the darkness for those who are unable to see. But for the noble ones, it is visible like an open space, even as the light to those with vision. Though it is near at hand, fools, inexpert in the *Dhamma*, do not understand. This same impression of the Buddha comes up again in the following verse in the *Udāna*:

*Mohasambandhano loko,
bhabbarūpo va dissati,
upadhibandhano bālo,
tamasā parivārito,
sassatoriva khāyati,
passato n'atthi kiñcanaṃ.clxii[32]*

"The world, enfeathered to delusion,
Feigns a promising mien,
The fool, to his assets bound,
Sees only darkness around,
It looks as though it would last,
But to him who sees there is naught."

The world appears as real to one who is fettered to delusion. He imagines it to be reliable. And so the fool, relying on his assets, is encompassed by the darkness. To him the world appears as eternal. But the one who has the right vision, knows that in reality there is nothing.

All this goes to show that the life outside is not much different from what goes on within the four walls of the cinema and the theatre. Just as, in the latter case, an enjoyable story is created out of a multitude of scenes, relayed at varying degrees of rapidity, backed by the delusive make-up of actors and actresses, so that one may lose oneself in a world of fantasy, even so, according to the point of view of *Dhamma*, the lifestyle outside is something made up and concocted.

However, the darkness within is much thicker than the darkness outside. The darkness outside may be dispelled even by a door flung open, as we saw above. But not so easily the darkness within. That is why, in the psalms of the *Theras* and *Therīs*, it is said that they split or burst asunder the mass of delusion, *tamokkhandhaṃ padāliya, tamokkhandhaṃ padālayiṃ*.clxiii[33] The pitchy black darkness of ignorance in the world is one that is thick enough to be split up and burst asunder. So it seems, the darkness within is almost tangibly thick. But the first incision on this thick curtain of darkness is made by the path knowledge of the Stream-winner.

As a side-light, we may cite an episode from the lives of the Venerables *Sāriputta* and *Mahā Moggalāna*, the two chief disciples of the Buddha. Formerly, as brahmin youths, they were known as *Upatissa* and *Kolita*. These two young men once went to see a hill-top festival, called *giraggasamajja*.clxiv[34] Since by then, their discerning wisdom was already matured, they suddenly developed a dejection about the entertainment going on. The hill-top festival, as it were, lost its festivity for them. They understood the vanity of it and could no longer enjoy it as before.

They may have already had a distant glimpse of the similarity between the two levels of experience, mentioned above. But they on their own could not get at the principles underlying the delusion involved.

Much later, as a wandering ascetic, when *Upatissa* met the Venerable *Assaji Thera* on his alms-round, he begged the latter to preach the *Dhamma* to him. Venerable *Assaji* said: "I know only a little". *Upatissa* also assured him: "I need only a little". Venerable *Assaji* preached 'a little' and *Upatissa*, too, heard 'a little', but since there was much in it, the latter attained the Fruit of Stream-winning even on hearing the first two lines of the following verse:

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā,

tesam hetuṃ Tathāgato āha,

tesañca yo nirodho,

evaṃ vādi mahāsamaṇo.clxv[35]

"Of things that proceed from a cause,

Their cause the *Tathāgata* has told,

And also their cessation,

Thus teaches the great ascetic."

The verse gives in a nutshell the law of dependent arising. From it, *Upatissa* got the clue to his riddle of life.

Some interpret the word *hetu*, cause, in this verse, as *avijjā*, or ignorance, the first link. But that is not the case. It refers to the basic principle known as *idappaccayatā*, the relatedness of this to that.clxvi[36] *Hetuppabhavā dhammā* is a reference to things dependently arisen. In point of fact, it is said about a Stream-winner that he has seen well the cause as well as the things arisen from a cause: *Hetu ca sudiṭṭho, hetusamuppanā ca dhammā*.clxvii[37] That means that he has seen the law of dependent arising as also the dependently arisen phenomena.

We have already discussed the significance of these two terms.clxviii[38] What is called *paṭicca samuppāda* is the basic principle itself. It is said that the wandering ascetic *Upatissa* was able to arouse the path of Stream-winning on hearing just the first two lines,clxix[39] and these state the basic principle as such.

The word *tesaṃ*, plural, clearly implies that the reference is to all the twelve factors, inclusive of ignorance. The cessation, also, is of those twelve, as for instance it is said in the *Udāna: Khayaṃ paccayānaṃ avedī*,clxx[40] "understood the cessation of conditions", since all the twelve are conditions.

To sum up: Whatever phenomena that arise from a cause, their cause is *idappaccayatā*, or the law of relatedness of this to that.

This being, this exists,

With the arising of this, this arises.

This not being, this does not exist,

With the cessation of this, this ceases.

And then the cessation of things arisen from a cause is ultimately *Nibbāna* itself. That is the implication of the oft recurrent phrase *avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā*,clxxi[41] "with the complete fading away and cessation of that very ignorance".

So then, from this discussion it should be clear that our illustration with the help of the simile of the cinema and the theatre is of much relevance to an understanding of the law of dependent arising. With this much, we shall wind up today.

Nibbana Sermons - Part 6

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

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbaśāṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ*.clxxii[1]

"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.

In our last sermon, we happened to discuss how the concept of existence built up with the help of ignorance and influxes, comes to cease with the cessation of ignorance and influxes.clxxiii[2] We explained it by means of similes and illustrations, based on the film show and the drama. As the starting point, we took up the simile of the picture called *carāṇa*, which the Buddha had made use of in the *Gaddulasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.clxxiv[3] With reference to a picture called *carāṇa*, popular in contemporary India, the Buddha has declared that the mind is more picturesque than that *carāṇa* picture. As an adaptation of that *carāṇa* picture for the modern day, we referred to the movie film and the drama in connection with our discussion of *saṅkhāras* in particular and *paṭicca samuppāda* in general. Today, let us try to move a little forward in the same direction.

In the latter part of the same Second *Gaddulasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, *Khandhasaṃyutta*, the Buddha gives a simile of a painter.clxxv[4] Translated it would read as follows: "Just as a dyer or a painter would fashion the likeness of a woman or of a man, complete in all its major and minor parts, on a well planed board, or a wall, or on a strip of cloth, with dye or lac or turmeric or indigo or madder, even so the untaught worldling creates, as it were, his own form, feelings, perceptions, preparations, and consciousness."

What the Buddha wants to convey to us by this comparison of the five grasping groups to an artefact done by a painter, is the insubstantiality and the vanity of those five groups. It brings out their compound and made-up nature. This essencelessness and emptiness is more clearly expressed in the *Pheṇapiṇḍūpamasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*. The summary verse at the end of that discourse would suffice for the present:

Pheṇapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ,

vedanā bubbuḷūpamā,

marīcikūpamā saññā,

saṅkhārā kadalūpamā,

māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ,

dīpitādiccabandhunā.clxxvi[5]

It says that the Buddha, the kinsman of the sun, has compared form to a mass of foam, feeling to a water bubble, perception to a mirage, preparations to a banana trunk, and consciousness to a magic show. These five similes bring out the insubstantiality of the five grasping groups. Their simulating and deceptive nature is

indicated by the similes. Not only the magic show, but even the other similes, like the mass of foam, are suggestive of simulation, in giving a false notion of compactness. They all convey the idea of insubstantiality and deceptiveness. Consciousness in particular, is described in that context as a conjurer's trick.

In the course of our discussion we happened to touch upon the significance of *saṅkhāras*, or preparations. As far as their relevance to films and dramas is concerned, they impart an appearance of reality to 'parts' and 'acts' which make up a film or a drama. Realism, in the context of art and drama, amounts to an apparent reality. It connotes the skill in deceiving the audience. It is, in fact, only a show of reality. The successful drama is one that effectively hoodwinks an audience. So realism, in that context, means appearing as real. It therefore has a nuance of deception.

Now what supports this deceptive and delusive quality of preparations is ignorance. All this 'acting' that is going on in the world is kept up by ignorance, which provides the background for it. Just as, in a drama, such preparations as change of dress, make-up contrivances, character portrayal, and stage-craft, create an atmosphere of delusion, so also are the *saṅkhāras*, or preparations, instrumental in building up these five grasping groups. So all this goes to show that the term *saṅkhāra* has the sense of preparing or producing. The realistic appearance of a film or a drama is capable of creating a delusion in an audience. Similarly, the apparent reality of the animate and inanimate objects in the world, creates delusion in the worldlings.

Now to hark back to two lines of a verse we had quoted earlier, *mohasambandhano loko, bhabbarūpo va dissati*, clxxvii[6] "the world appears as real to one who is fettered to delusion". This means that the world has an apparent reality, that it merely gives the impression of something real to one who is deluded. It is clear, therefore, that *saṅkhāras* are responsible for some sort of preparation or concoction. What serves as the background for it, is the darkness of ignorance. This preparation, this concoction goes on, behind the veil of ignorance.

We come across a discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, in which this primary sense of preparation in the word *saṅkhāra* is explicitly stated, namely the *Khajjanīyasutta*. In that discourse, each of the five grasping groups is defined, and the term *saṅkhāra* is defined as follows:

Kiñca, bhikkhave, saṅkhāre vadetha? Saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharontī'ti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā 'saṅkhārā'ti vuccanti. Kiñca saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharonti? Rūpaṃ rūpattāya saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharonti, vedanaṃ vedanattāya saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharonti, saññaṃ saññattāya saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharonti, saṅkhāre saṅkhārattāya saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharonti, viññānaṃ viññānattāya saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharonti. Saṅkhatam abhisāṅkharontī'ti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā 'saṅkhārā'ti vuccanti. clxxviii[7]

"And what, monks, would you say are 'preparations'? They prepare the prepared - that, monks, is why they are called preparations. And what is the prepared that they prepare? They prepare, as a prepared, form into the state of form, they prepare, as a prepared, feeling into the state of feeling, they prepare, as a prepared, perception into the state of perception, they prepare, as a prepared, preparations into the state of

preparations, they prepare, as a prepared, consciousness into the state of consciousness. They prepare the prepared, so, that is why, monks, they are called preparations."

This explains why *saṅkhāras* are so called. That is to say, the sense in which they are called *saṅkhāras*. They prepare the prepared, *saṅkhata*, into that state. And the prepared is form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness. *Saṅkhāras* are therefore instrumental in building up each of these grasping groups. The most intriguing statement is that even the *saṅkhāras* are built up by *saṅkhāras*. They play the part of preparing a sort of make-believe activity. In this sense it is associated with the idea of intention, as being produced by intention.

The two terms *abhisāṅkhataṃ abhisañcetaṃ* are often found in juxtaposition, as if they are synonymous.clxxix[8] *Abhisāṅkhata* means 'specially prepared', and *abhisañcetaṃ* means 'thought out' or 'intended'. Here we see the relationship of *saṅkhāras* to intention. The preparation is done by means of intentions. The two words *ceteti pakappeti* are also found used together.clxxx[9] Intention and imagination play their part in this matter of preparation. So in the last analysis, it is something constructed by imagination. All of these five groups are thought-constructs. As suggested by the similes of the picture and the painter, these five groups, in the final reckoning, turn out to be the products of imagination.

As far as the nature of these preparations is concerned, there are these three kinds of preparations mentioned in the *Dhamma*, namely *kāyasaṅkhāra*, *vacīsaṅkhāra*, and *manosaṅkhāra*, bodily preparations, verbal preparations, and mental preparations.clxxxii[10] These terms have to do with merit and demerit. They are cited in connection with *kamma*, implying that beings accumulate *kamma* by means of body, word and mind.

What supports this heaping up of preparations is ignorance. Ignorance provides the background, as in the case of the drama and the movie. This relationship between ignorance and preparations is clearly brought out in the *Cetanāsutta* of the *Saṅcetanīyavagga* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.clxxxiii[11] According to that *sutta*, the world attributes an activity to something by regarding it as a unit - by perceiving it as a compact unit. In other words, it is the way of the world to superimpose the concept of a unit or self-agency to wherever there appears to be some sort of activity. As we mentioned in connection with the simile of the whirlpool, viewed from a distance, the whirlpool appears as a centre or a base.clxxxiii[12] In the same way, wherever there appears to be some form of activity, we tend to bring in the concept of a unit.

Now it is this very ignorance, this 'ignoring', that becomes the seed-bed for preparations. The basic presumption of this ignorance is that preparations must originate from a unitary centre. And the Buddha also points out, in the *Cetanāsutta* of the *Saṅcetanīyavagga*, that the root cause of bodily, verbal, and mental preparations, is ignorance.clxxxiv[13] Since the discourse is rather lengthy, we propose to analyse it in three sections, for facility of understanding.

Kāye vā, bhikkhave, sati kāyasañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ.
Vācāya vā, bhikkhave, sati vācīsañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ.
Mane vā, bhikkhave, sati manosañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ avij-
jāpaccayā va.

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

Now let us take this as the first section and try to get at its meaning. Given the concept of a body, due to intentions based on that concept of a body, there arises inwardly pleasure and pain. That is, when one imagines that there is a body, due to thoughts which take body as their object, one experiences pleasure and pain. What is called 'the body', is a huge mass of activity, something like a big workshop or a factory. But because of ignorance, if one takes it as one thing, that is as a unit, then there is room for bodily intention to come in. One can objectify the body and arouse thoughts of the body. Thereby one experiences pleasure and pain. This is the implication of the above statement.

Similarly, in the case of speech, it may be said that language is a conglomeration of letters and words. But when speech is taken as a real unit, one can form intentions about speech and inwardly experience pleasure and pain. So also in the case of the mind. It is not an entity by itself, like a soul, as postulated by other religions. It is again only a heap of thoughts. But if one grants that there is a mind, due to that very presumption, one experiences inwardly pleasure and pain with mind as its object. The concluding phrase of that paragraph is particularly significant. It says that all this is conditioned by ignorance.

Let us now take up the second part:

Sāmaṃ vā taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Pare vāssa taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisankharonti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Sampajāno vā taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Asampajāno vā taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ.

"Either he himself prepares that bodily preparation, owing to which there would be that inward pleasure and pain. Or else others prepare for him that bodily preparation, owing to which there would be for him inward pleasure and pain. Either he, being fully aware, prepares that bodily preparation, owing to which there would be for him inward pleasure and pain. Or else he, being fully unaware, prepares that bodily preparation, owing to which there would be for him that inward pleasure and pain."

The substance of this paragraph seems to be that one by oneself prepares the bodily preparation that brings one pleasure or pain inwardly and that others also prepare for him such a bodily preparation. It is also said that the bodily preparation can occur either with or without awareness. About the verbal and mental preparations too, a similar specification is made. This is the summary of the second section.

The third and final section is the most significant:

Imesu, bhikkhave, dhammesu avijjā anupatitā. Avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ, sā vācā na

hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ, so mano na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ, khettaṃ taṃ na hoti, vatthum taṃ na hoti, āyatanam taṃ na hoti, adhikaraṇam taṃ na hoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ.

"Monks, in all these cases, ignorance hangs on. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, that body is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure or pain, that speech is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain, that mind is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure or pain."

Since all the instances mentioned earlier are accompanied by ignorance, the utter fading away and cessation of that very ignorance prevents, as it were, the crystallization of that body, speech, and mind, due to which inward pleasure and pain can arise. In other words, it removes the field, the ground, the base and the provenance for the arising of inward pleasure and pain.

This shows that, once the existence of a body is granted, with that concept of a body as its object, bodily preparations come to be built up. Or, in other words, given the concept of a body, and due to bodily intention, that is by treating it as a real unit, one experiences inwardly pleasure and pain because of thoughts concerning the body.

So also in regard to speech and mind. It is emphatically stated that all this occurs because of ignorance. What confers on them all the status of a unit, through the perception of the compact, is this very ignorance. As for the second paragraph, what it says is simply that those bodily preparations and the like can be made by oneself as well as by others, and that too either being aware or unaware.

Now all these are related to ignorance. Therefore, at whatever point of time this ignorance ceases completely in someone, then for him there is no consciousness of a body, though from an outside point of view he appears to have a body. He may use words, he may speak, but for him there is nothing substantial in linguistic usage. He seems to be making use of a mind, mind-objects also come up, but he does not regard it as a unit. Therefore, inwardly, no pleasures and pains come up.

With the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of preparations. Thereby all pleasures and pains cease. This, in other words, is the state of *Nibbāna*. It appears, then, that this discourse gives us a clue to the state of *Nibbāna*. It says something about bodily, verbal, and mental preparations.

If we try to understand its message in relation to the analogy of the film show and the drama, mentioned earlier, we may offer the following explanation: Now in the case of a film show or a drama, the preparations remain as preparations so long as there is that darkness of ignorance. The realism or the realistic appearance of the acting of actors and actresses, or the roles and guises they assume in dress and speech, depends on the veil of ignorance that conceals their true nature.

Similarly, here too, the implication is that it is ignorance which invests these preparations with the realistic appearance. If at any point of time that ignorance happens to cease, then there will be no pleasure or displeasure for the audience, however much make-up and pretension there is.

It is such a situation of non-enjoyment that we happened to mention in the previous sermon with reference to the witnessing of a hill-top festival by *Upatissa* and *Kolita*.clxxxv[14] They had a flash of insight due to the light of wisdom that came from within, not due to any illumination from outside. Because of it, those preparations ceased to be preparations. From this we can understand that the term *saṅkhāra* becomes meaningful only against the background of ignorance.

To move a step further, it is against the background of both ignorance and preparations that all the subsequent links in the formula become meaningful. As far as the interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form is concerned, all what we have said above regarding the reflection of name-and-form on consciousness,clxxxvi[15] becomes meaningful only so long as the reality of preparations is granted, that is, only so far as their deceptive nature is maintained. But that deceptive nature owes its existence to ignorance. This way we can unravel one aspect of the essential significance of the term *saṅkhāra*.

Then there is another point worth considering in this respect. *Saṅkhāra* as the second link in the *paṭicca samuppāda* formula is defined by the Buddha in the *Vibhaṅgasutta* in the *Nidānasamyutta* not in terms of *kāyasaṅkhāra*, *vacīsaṅkhāra*, and *manosaṅkhāra*, but as *kāyasaṅkhāro*, *vacīsaṅkhāro*, and *cittasaṅkhāro*.clxxxvii[16] This might seem rather intriguing. *Katame ca, bhikkhave, saṅkhārā? Tayome, bhikkhave, saṅkhārā - kāyasaṅkhāro, vacīsaṅkhāro, cittasaṅkhāro*. "What, monks, are preparations? Monks, there are these three preparations - body-preparation, speech-preparation, and mind-preparation."

Also, it is noteworthy that here the term is given in the singular. In the majority of instances it is found in the plural number, but here in the definition of the term the singular is used as *kāyasaṅkhāro*, *vacīsaṅkhāro*, and *cittasaṅkhāro*. The significance of this usage is explained for us by the *Cūḷavedallasutta*, in the *Dhamma* discussion between the *arahant* nun *Dhammadinnā* and the lay disciple *Visākha*. There the venerable *Therī*, in answer to a question raised by the lay disciple, comes out with a definition of these three terms:

Assāsapassāsā kho, āvuso Visākha, kāyikā, ete dhammā kāyappaṭibaddhā, tasmā assāsapassāsā kāyasaṅkhāro.clxxxviii[17] "Friend *Visākha*, in-breaths and out-breaths are bodily, these things are bound up with the body, that is why in-breaths and out-breaths are a body-preparation." According to this interpretation, in-breathing and out-breathing are a body-preparation in the sense that their activity is connected with the body. There is no explicit mention of karma here.

Then the definition of *vacīsaṅkhāro* is as follows: *Pubbe kho, āvuso Visākha, vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācaṃ bhindati, tasmā vitakkavicārā vacīsaṅkhāro*. "Friend *Visākha*, first having thought and pondered one breaks into speech, that is why thinking and pondering are a speech-preparation." Here *vacīsaṅkhāra* is defined as thinking and pondering, not in terms of karma such as abusive speech and the like.

Then, as the third, *cittasaṅkhāro* is given the following definition: *Saññā ca vedanā ca cetasikā ete dhammā cittappaṭibaddhā, tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro*. "Perception and feeling are mental, they are bound up with the mind, that is why perception and feeling are a mind-preparation." Perception and feeling are called a mind-preparation because they are mental and have to do with the mind.

According to this definition it appears, then, that what the Buddha had indicated as the second link of the formula of dependent arising, is in-breathing and out-breathing, thinking and pondering, and perception and feeling. The mode of interpretation, we have adopted, shows us that the word *saṅkhāra*, in the context of a drama, for instance, can mean preparations or some sort of preliminary arrangement or fashioning.

Now this sense of preparation is applicable to in-breaths and out-breaths too. As we know, in all our bodily activities, particularly in lifting some weight and the like, or when exerting ourselves, we sometimes take a deep breath, almost impulsively. That is to say, the most basic activity of this body is in-breathing and out-breathing.

Moreover, in the definition of *vacīsaṅkhāro* it is clearly stated that one speaks out having first thought out and pondered. This is a clear instance of the role of *saṅkhāra* as a 'preparation' or a preliminary activity. Now the word 'rehearsal' is in common use in the society. Sometimes, the day before a drama is staged for the society, a sort of trial performance is held. Similarly, before breaking out into speech, one thinks and ponders. That is why sometimes we find words issuing out before we can be aware of it. Thinking and pondering is called *vacīsaṅkhāro*, because they 'prepare' speech. The sense of 'preparation' is therefore quite apt.

Then there is perception and feeling, for which the term *cittasaṅkhāro* is used here, instead of *manosaṅkhāra*. The reason for it is that what we reckon as *manosaṅkhāra* is actually the more prominent level represented by intentions and the like. The background for those intentions, the subliminal preparatory stage, is to be found in perception and feeling. It is perception and feeling that give the impetus for the arising of the more prominent stage of intention. They provide the necessary mental condition for doing evil or good deeds. This way, we can get at the subtle nuances of the term *saṅkhāra*. Just as in the case of an iceberg floating in the ocean, the greater part is submerged and only a fraction of it shows above the surface, so also the deeper nuances of this term are rather imperceptible.

Beneath our heap of body actions, verbal actions, and mental acts of willing or intentions lies a huge mountain of activities. Breathing in and breathing out is the most basic activity in one's life. It is, in fact, the criterion for judging whether one is alive or dead. For instance, when someone falls in a swoon, we examine him to see whether he is still breathing, whether this basic activity is still there in him. Also, in such a case, we try to see whether he can speak and feel, whether perception and feeling are still there in him. So in this way we can understand how these basic forms of activity decide the criterion for judging whether life is present or extinct in a person.

That activity is something internal. But even at that level, defilements lie dormant, because ignorance is hiding there too. In fact, that is precisely why they are reckoned as *saṅkhāra*. Usually, one thinks in terms of 'I' and 'mine', as: "I breathe", "I speak",

"I see", and "I feel". So, like the submerged portion of an iceberg, these subtler layers of preparations also have ignorance hidden within them. That is why the attempt of pre-Buddhistic ascetics to solve this *saṃsāric* riddle by tranquillity alone met with failure.

Pre-Buddhistic ascetics, and even *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*, thought that they can get out of this *saṃsāra* by tranquillizing the bodily activities, the verbal activities, and the mental activities. But they did not understand that all these are *saṅkhāras*, or preparations, therefore they were confronted with a certain dilemma. They went on calming down the bodily activities to subtler and subtler levels. They calmed down the in-breaths and out-breaths, they managed to suppress thinking and pondering by concentration exercises, but without proper understanding. It was only a temporary calming down.

However, once they reached the level of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, they had to face a certain problem. In fact, the very designation of that level of attainment betrays the dilemma they were in. It means that one is at a loss to say definitely whether there is some perception or not. The *Pañcattayasutta* clearly reveals this fact. It gives expression to the problem facing those ascetics in the following significant statement:

*Saññā rogo saññā gaṇḍo saññā sallam, asaññā sammoho, etaṃ santam etaṃ pañītam yadidaṃ nevasaññānāsaññam.*clxxxix[18] "Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart, but not to have perception is to be deluded, this is peaceful, this is excellent, that is, neither-perception-nor-non-perception."

They understood to some extent that this perception is a disease, a trouble, a tumour, or a wound, or else a thorn, they wanted to be free from perception. But then, on the other hand, they feared that to be totally free from perception is to be in a deluded state. Therefore they concluded: 'This is peaceful, this is excellent, that is neither-perception-nor-non-perception', and came to a halt there. That is why the Buddha rejected even *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* and went in search of the stilling of all preparations.

So the kind of tranquillity meditation followed by the pre-Buddhistic ascetics, through various higher knowledges and meditative attainments, could never bring about a stilling of all preparations. Why? Because the ignorance underlying those preparations were not discernible to their level of wisdom. In the least, they could not even recognize their *saṅkhāra* nature. They thought that these are only states of a soul. Therefore, like the present day Hindu Yogins following the philosophy of the *Upaniśads*, they thought that breathing is just one layer of the self, it is one of the outer rinds of the soul.

In fact, the 'kernel' of self was supposed to have around it the four rinds, *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *saṃjñamaya*, and *vijñānamaya*. That is to say, made out of food, breath, perception, and consciousness, respectively. Apart from treating them as states of a self, they were not able to understand that all these activities are *saṅkhāras* and that ignorance is the spring-board for them.

In view of the fact that *Nibbāna* is called the stilling of all preparations, *sabbasaṅkhārasamatha*, one might sometimes conclude that the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feeling, *saññāvedayitanirodha*, is in itself *Nibbāna*. But it is on rising from that attainment, which is like a deep freeze, that one makes contact with the three deliverances, the signless, *animitta*, the desireless, *appaṇihita*, and the void, *suññata*.

According to the Buddhist outlook, it is wisdom that decides the issue, and not tranquillity. Therefore, in the last analysis, preparations cease to be preparations when the tendency to grasp the sign in the preparations is got rid of and signlessness is experienced. The 'sign' stands for the notion of permanence and it accounts for the deceptive nature of preparations, as in the case of an actor's make-up and stage-craft. It is the sign of permanence that leads to a desire for something, to expectations and aspirations.

So that sign has to leave together with the desire, for the Desireless Deliverance to come about. Then one has to see all this as essenceless and void. It is just because of desire that we regard something as 'essence-tial'. We ask for the purpose of something, when we have desire. Now it is through this unique vision of the Signless, the Desireless, and the Void, that the Buddha arrived at the state of stilling of all preparations.

We resort to the simile of the film show and the drama not out of disregard for the precept concerning abstention from such diversions, but because the Buddha has called dancing a form of mad behaviour. *Ummattakam idaṃ, bhikkhave, ariyassa vinaye yadidaṃ naccam.*^[19] "This, monks, is a form of madness according to the noble one's discipline, namely dancing." Now what is the nature of a madman? He is jumpy. From the standpoint of *Dhamma*, dancing is a form of jumpiness. In fact, all preparations are that. It shows a nervous stress as well as a nervous release. It is an endless series of winding and unwinding.

What makes this problem of *saṃsāra* such a knotty one to solve? We go on heaping up karmic actions, but when the time comes to experience their consequences, we do not regard them as mere results of karma, but superimpose an 'I' on that experience. So we act with the notion of an 'I' and react to the consequences again with the notion of an 'I'. Because of that egoistic reaction, we heap up fresh karma. So here is a case of stress and release, of winding and rewinding.

This is like a tangled skein. Sometimes, when an unskilled person tries to disentangle a tangled skein while disentangling one end, the other end gets entangled. So it is, in the case of this *saṃsāric* ball of thread. While doing a karma, one is conscious of it as "I am doing it". And when it is the turn to suffer for it, one does not think it as a result of that karma. Consequently one accumulates fresh karma through various attachments and conflicts arising out of it. Here too we see some sort of a drama.

Now if one can get the opportunity to see either a rehearsal or the back-stage preparations for a drama, which however is not usually accessible to the public, one would be able to see through the drama. If one can steal a peep into the back-stage make-up contrivances of actors and actresses, one would see how ugly persons can

become comely and the wretched can appear regal. One would then see what a 'poor show' it is.

In the same way there is something dramatic in these basic preparations, namely - in-breathing and out-breathing, thinking and pondering, perception and feeling. If one sees these back-stage preparations with wisdom, one would be disenchanted. What tranquillity meditation does, is to temporarily calm them down and derive some sort of happiness. That too is necessary from the point of view of concentration, to do away with restlessness and the like, but it does not dispel ignorance. That is why, in insight meditation, one tries to understand preparations for what they are by dispelling ignorance.

The more one sees preparations as preparations, ignorance is dispelled, and the more one dispels ignorance, the preparations lose their significance as preparations. Then one sees the nature of preparations with wisdom as signless, desireless, and void. So much so that, in effect, preparations cease to be preparations.

This is something of a marvel. If we now hark back to the two words 'winding' and 'rewinding', the entire world, or *saṃsāric* existence in its entirety, is a process of winding and rewinding. Where the winding ends and the rewinding begins is a matter beyond our comprehension. But one thing is clear - all these comes to cease when craving and grasping are abandoned. It is towards such an objective that our minds turn by recognizing preparations for what they are, as a result of a deeper analysis of their nature.

The relation of *saṅkhāras* to ignorance is somewhat similar to the relation a drama has to its back-stage preparations. It seems, then, that from the standpoint of *Dhamma* the entire *saṃsāra* is a product of specifically prepared intentions, even like the drama with its back-stage preparations.

Let us return to the simile of the cinema again. The average man, when he says that he has seen a film show, what he has actually seen is just one scene flashing on the screen at a time. As we happened to mention in an earlier sermon, people go to the cinema and to the theatre saying: "We are going to see a film show, we are going to see a drama".^{cxci[20]} And they return saying: "We have seen a film show, we have seen a drama". But actually, they have neither seen a film nor a drama completely.

What really has happened? How did they see a film show? Just as much as one creates a name-and-form on one's screen of consciousness with the help of preparations, the film-goer has created a story by putting together the series of scenes falling on the screen.

What we mean to say is this: Now supposing the series of consecutive frames, which make up a motion picture, is made to appear on the scene when there is no spectator in the cinema hall - will there be a film at all? While such an experiment is going on, if a film-goer steps in late, half way through, he would not be able to gather that portion of the film already gone. It is gone, gone , gone forever. Those preparations are irrevocably past.

A film show actually becomes a film show thanks to that glue used by the audience - the glue of craving. The Buddha has preached that this craving has three characteristics, namely: *ponobhavika*, *nandirāgasahagata*, and *tatratatrābhinandī*.cxcii[21] *Ponobhavika* as a characteristic of craving means, in its broader sense, that it leads to re-becoming. One might think that by 're-becoming' only the connecting up of one existence in *saṃsāra* with another is meant. But that is not all. It is craving that connects up one moment of existence with another.

One who is seeing a film show, for instance, connects up the first scene with the second, in order to understand the latter. And that is how one 'sees' a film show and comes back and says: "I have seen a film show". All the scenes do not fall on the screen at once, but a connecting-up goes on. That is the idea behind the term *ponobhavika*. In this connecting up of one scene with another there is an element of re-becoming or re-generation.

Then there is the term *nandirāgasahagata*. This is the other additive which should be there for one to enjoy the film show. It means the nature of delighting and getting attached. Craving in particular is like a glue. In fact, a synonym for it is *lepa*, which means a 'glue'.cxci[22] Another synonym is *visattika*, an 'adhesive' or a 'sticky substance'.cxci[23] Even the word *rāga*, or attachment, already conveys this sense. So craving, or desire, glues the scenes together.

Then comes the term *tatratatrābhinandī*, the nature of delighting, in particular now here, now there. It is, in effect, the association of one scene with another in order to make up a story out of it. That is why we made the statement: 'So far not a single cinema has held a film show and not a single theatre has staged a drama'.cxci[24] But all the same, those who went to the cinema and the theatre witnessed a show and a drama. How? They produced them, or prepared them, with their 'sticky' defilements on their own.

Now in the same way, worldly beings create a film show of name-and-form on the screen of consciousness with the help of preparations, or *saṅkhāras*. Name-and-form is a product of imagination. What insight meditators often refer to as reflection on 'name-and-form preparations', amounts to this. Is there something real in name-and-form? In our very first sermon we happened to say something on this point.cxcvi[25]

In the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* the Buddha gives utterance to the following verse:

Anattani attamāniṃ,

passa lokaṃ sadevakaṃ,

nivittṭhaṃ nāmarūpasmīṃ,

idaṃ saccaṃ 'ti maññati.cxcvii[26]

"Just see the world, with all its gods,

Fancying a self where none exists,

Entrenched in name-and-form it holds

The conceit that this is real."

It is as if the Buddha is pinpointing the illusory and deceptive nature of name-and-form. As we mentioned before, scenes fall on the cinema screen only one at a time. Because of the rapidity of the movie film, it is difficult for one to be aware of this fact. Now, in the case of a drama, the curtain goes down between acts and the audience waits for the curtain to go up. But they wait, ready with their glue to connect the previous act with the one to come, to construct a drama. By the time a certain scene falls on the cinema screen, the previous one is gone for good. Scenes to follow have not yet come. Whatever scene falls on the screen, now, will not stay there. So what we have here, is something illusory, a deceptive phenomenon.

Let us now consider an instance like this: Sometimes we see a dog, crossing a plank over a stream, stopping half way through to gaze at the water below. It wags its tail, or growls, or keeps on looking at and away from the water, again and again. Why does it do so? Seeing its own image in the water, it imagines that to be another dog. So it either wags its tail in a friendly way, or growls angrily, or else it keeps on stealing glances out of curiosity - love, hate, and delusion.

In this case, the dog thinks that it is looking because it sees a dog. But what is really happening? It is just because it is looking that it sees a dog. If the dog had not looked down, it would not have seen a dog looking up at it from below, that is to say - its own image. Now it is precisely this sort of illusion that is going on with regard to this name-and-form, the preparations, and sense-perception. **Here lies the secret of Dependent Arising.**

As a flash-back to our film show, it may be added that if a film reel is played at a time when there is no spectator, no film show will be registered anywhere, because there is no mind to put together. It merely flashed on the screen. But if someone had been there to receive it, to contact with his sense-bases, that is, to see with his eyes, hear with his ears, and make mental contact with desire, then there comes to be a film show. And so also in the case of a drama.

Film producers and dramatists think that the production of the film and the drama is solely their work. But in the last analysis, it is the audience that gives the film and the drama the finishing touch, to make them finished products. Similarly, we tend to think that every object in the world exists in its own right. But then this is what is called *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, the 'personality view', which carries with it the self-bias.

It is such a view that made the dog imagine that there is another dog in the water. It imagined that the dog is there, even when it is not looking. It may have thought: "I am looking because a dog appears there". But the fact is that the dog appears there because it cares to look. Here, then, we have a case of dependent arising, or *paṭicca samuppāda*.

The word *paṭicca* has a very deep meaning. The Buddha borrowed many words from the existing philosophical tradition in India. Sometimes he infused new meanings into them and adopted them to his terminology. But the term *paṭicca*

samuppāda is not to be found in any other philosophical system. The special significance of the term lies in the word *paṭicca*.

On a certain occasion, the Buddha himself gave a definition to this term *paṭicca samuppāda*. Now it is fairly well known that the Buddha declared that all this suffering is dependently arisen. What then is to be understood by the word *dukkha*, or 'suffering'? He defines it in terms of the five grasping groups, or the five aggregates of clinging, as it is said: *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā,cxcviii[27]* "in short, the five grasping groups are suffering". So then suffering, or the five grasping groups, is something dependently arisen.

In one discourse in the *Nidānasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* we find the Buddha making the following significant statement: *Paṭiccasamuppannaṃ kho, Upavāṇa, dukkhaṃ vuttaṃ mayā. Kiṃ paṭicca? Phassaṃ paṭicca.cxcix[28]* "*Upavāṇa*, I have declared that suffering is dependently arisen. Dependent on what? **Dependent on contact.**" So from this statement, also, it is clear that the five groups of grasping arise because of contact, that is by contacting through the six bases.

Considered in this way, a thing is called dependently arisen because it arises on being touched by the six sense-bases. That is why it is called *anicca*, or impermanent. The film show, for instance, was not something already made, or 'ready made'. It arose due to contact. The phrase *saṅkhataṃ paṭiccasamuppannaṃ,cc[29]* 'prepared and dependently arisen', suggests that the prepared nature is also due to that contact. What may be called *abhisāṅkhata viññāṇa,cci[30]* 'specifically prepared consciousness', is that sort of consciousness which gets attached to name-and-form.

When one sees a film show, one interprets a scene appearing on the screen according to one's likes and dislikes. It becomes a thing of experience for him. Similarly, by imagining a self in name-and-form, consciousness gets attached to it. It is such a consciousness, which is established on name-and-form, that can be called *abhisāṅkhata viññāṇa*.

Then could there be also a consciousness which does not reflect a name-and-form? Yes, there could be. That is what is known as *anidassana viññāṇa,ccii[31]* or 'non-manifestative consciousness'. This brings us to an extremely abstruse topic in this *Dhamma*.

There is a very deep verse occurring at the end of the *Kevaddhasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* which has been variously interpreted by scholars both eastern and western. It runs:

Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ,

anantaṃ sabbaṭo pabhaṃ,

ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,

tejo vāyo na gādhati,

ettha dīghañca rassañca,

aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,

ettha nāmañca rūpañca,

asesaṃ uparujjhati,

viññāṇassa nirodhena,

etth'etaṃ uparujjhati.ccciii[32]

The commentary advances several interpretations to this verse.ccciv[33] Being unable to give one definite meaning, it suggests several. However, since we have developed a certain mode of interpretation so far, we propose to give preference to it before getting down to the commentarial interpretation. Now let us see whether our mode of interpretation can make this verse meaningful.

First of all, we have to trace the circumstances which provide the setting for this verse in the *Kevalāḍḍhasutta*. The Buddha brings out a past episode, relating to the company of monks. A certain monk conceived the riddle: 'Where do these four great primaries, earth, water, fire, and air, cease altogether?' He did not approach the Buddha with his problem, probably because he thought that somewhere in this world-system those four elements could cease.

So what did he do? As he had psychic powers he went from heaven to heaven and *Brahma* realm to *Brahma* realm, asking the gods and *Brahmas* this question: 'Where do these four primaries cease?' None among the gods and *Brahmas* could answer. In the end, *Mahā Brahma* himself asked him, why he took the trouble to come all the way there, when he could have easily consulted the Buddha. Then that monk approached the Buddha and put the riddle to him.

But before answering the riddle, the Buddha recommended a restatement of it, saying: 'Monk, that is not the way you should put it. You should have worded it differently.' Now that means that the question is wrongly put. It is incorrect to ask where the four great primaries cease. There is a particular way of wording it. And this is how the Buddha reformulated that riddle:

Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī,

tejo vāyo na gādhati,

kattha dīghañca rassañca,

aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,

kattha nāmañca rūpañca,

asesaṃ uparujjhati?

"Where do earth and water,

Fire and wind no footing find,
Where is it that long and short,
Fine and coarse, pleasant, unpleasant,
As well as name-and-form,
Are held in check in a way complete?"

Here the Buddha introduces a phrase of special significance: *na gādhati*, 'does not find a footing'. So the question, as restated, means: "Where do the four primaries not get a footing?" The question, then, is not about a cessation of the four primaries, it is not a question of their cessation somewhere in the world or in the world system. The correct way to put it, is to ask where the four great primaries do not find a footing. The Buddha adds that it may also be asked where long and short, fine and coarse, pleasant and unpleasant, as well as name-and-form are held in check completely. The word *aparujjhati* means 'holding in check'.

Having first reformulated the question, the Buddha gave the answer to it in the verse previously quoted. Let us now try to get at the meaning of this verse. We shall not translate, at the very outset, the first two lines of the verse, *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*. These two lines convey a very deep meaning. Therefore, to start with, we shall take the expression as it is, and explain its relation to what follows.

It is in this consciousness, which is qualified by the terms *anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ,* and *sabbato pabhaṃ*, that earth, water, fire, and air do not find a footing. Also, it is in this consciousness that long and short, fine and coarse, and pleasant and unpleasant, as well as name-and-form, are kept in check. It is by the cessation of consciousness that all these are held in check.

Nibbana Sermons - Part 7

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

Etam santaṃ, etam paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ..ccv[i]

"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. Towards the end of the last sermon we happened to quote a certain verse from the *Kevaḍḍhasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The verse runs as follows:

*Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ,
anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,
tejo vāyo na gādhati,
ettha dīghañca rassañca,
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,
ettha nāmañca rūpañca,
asesaṃ uparujjhati,
viññāṇassa nirodhena,
etth'etaṃ uparujjhati.ccvii[i]*

The other day, we could give only a general idea of the meaning of this verse in brief, because of the question of time. Today, we propose to attempt a detailed explanation of it. To start with, we purposely avoid rendering the first two lines, which appear as the crux of the whole verse. Taking those two lines as they are, we could paraphrase the verse as follows:

It is in a consciousness, that is *anidassana*, *ananta*, and *sabbato pabha*, that earth, water, fire, and air do not find a footing. It is in this consciousness that long and short, fine and coarse, and pleasant and unpleasant, as well as name-and-form, are kept in check. It is by the cessation of consciousness that all these are held in check.

Let us now try to sort out the meaning of the difficult words in the first two lines. First of all, in the expression *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ*, there is the term *anidassana*. The meaning of the word *anidassana* is fairly well known. It means 'illustration'. Something that 'throws light on' or 'makes clear' is called *anidassana*. This is the basic sense.

We find an instance of the use of this word, even in this basic sense, in the first *Kosalasutta* among the Tens of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. It is in connection with the description of *abhibhāyatanā*, bases of mastery, where there is a reference to contemplation devices known as *kaṣiṇa*. It is said that even the flax flower can be used initially as a sign for *kaṣiṇa* meditation. A flax flower is described in the following words: *Umāpupphaṃ nīlaṃ nīlavaṇṇaṃ nīlanidassanaṃ nīlanibhāsaṃ.ccvii[iii]* which may be rendered as: "The flax flower, blue, blue-coloured, manifesting blue, shining blue". *Nīlanidassanaṃ* suggests that the flax flower is an illustration of blue colour, or that it is a manifestation of blue. *Anidassana* could therefore be said to refer to whatever does not manifest anything.

In fact, we have a very good example in support of this suggested sense in the *Kakacūpamasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. There we find the Buddha putting a certain question to the monks in order to bring out a simile: "Monks, suppose a man comes with crimson, turmeric, indigo or carmine and says: 'I shall draw pictures and make pictures appear on the sky!' What do you think, monks, could that man draw pictures and make pictures appear there?" Then the monks reply: *Ayañhi, bhante, ākāso arūpī anidassano. Tattha na sukaraṃ rūpaṃ likhituṃ, rūpapātubhāvaṃ kātuṃ.ccviii[iv]* "This sky, Lord, is

immaterial and non-illustrative. It is not easy to draw a picture there or make manifest pictures there."

Here we have the words in support of the above suggested meaning. The sky is said to be *arūpī anidassano*, immaterial and non-illustrative. That is why one cannot draw pictures there or make pictures appear there. There is nothing material in the sky to make manifest pictures. That is, the sense in which it is called *anidassano* in this context.

Let us now see how meaningful that word is, when used with reference to consciousness as *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*. Why the sky is said to be non-manifestative we could easily understand by the simile. But how can consciousness become non-manifestative? First and foremost we can remind ourselves of the fact that our consciousness has in it the ability to reflect. That ability is called *paccavekkhana*, 'looking back'. Sometimes the Buddha has given the simile of the mirror with reference to this ability, as for instance in the *AmbalatthikāRāhulovādasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.ccix[v] In the *Ānandasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*, also, he has used the simile of the mirror.ccx[vi] In the former *sutta* preached to Venerable *Rāhula* the Buddha uses the simile of the mirror to stress the importance of reflection in regard to bodily, verbal, and mental action.

In our last sermon, we gave a simile of a dog crossing a plank over a stream and looking at its own reflection in the water.ccxvii[vii] That, too, is a kind of reflection. But from that we can deduce a certain principle with regard to the question of reflection, namely, that the word stands for a mode of becoming deluded as well as a mode of getting rid of the delusion. What creates a delusion is the way that dog is repeatedly looking down from his own point of view on the plank to see a dog in the water. That is unwise reflection born of non-radical attention, *ayoniso manasikāra*. Under the influence of the personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, it goes on looking at its own image, wagging its tail and growling. But wise reflection born of radical attention, *yoniso manasikāra*, is what is recommended in the *AmbalatthikāRāhulovādasutta* with its thematic repetitive phrase *paccavekkhitvā, paccavekkhitvā*,ccxviii[viii] "reflecting again and again".

Wise reflection inculcates the *Dhamma* point of view. Reflection based on right view, *sammā diṭṭhi*, leads to deliverance. So this is the twin aspect of reflection. But this we mention by the way. The point we wish to stress is that consciousness has in it the nature of reflecting something, like a mirror.

Now *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ* is a reference to the nature of the released consciousness of an *arahant*. It does not reflect anything. To be more precise, it does not reflect a *nāma-rūpa*, or name-and-form. An ordinary individual sees a *nāma-rūpa*, when he reflects, which he calls 'I' and 'mine'. It is like the reflection of that dog, which sees its own delusive reflection in the water. A non-*arahant*, upon reflection, sees name-and-form, which however he mistakes to be his self. With the notion of 'I' and 'mine' he falls into delusion with regard to it. But the *arahant's* consciousness is an unestablished consciousness.

We have already mentioned in previous sermons about the established consciousness and the unestablished consciousness.ccxix[ix] A non-*arahant's* consciousness is established on name-and-form. The unestablished consciousness is that which is free from name-and-form and is unestablished on name-and-form. The established consciousness, upon reflection, reflects name-and-form, on which it is established, whereas the unestablished consciousness does not find a name-and-form as a reality. The *arahant* has no attachments or entanglements in regard to name-and-form. In short, it is a sort of penetration of name-and-form, without getting entangled in it. This is how we have to unravel the meaning of the expression *anidassana viññāṇa*.

By way of further clarification of this sense of *anidassana*, we may remind ourselves of the fact that manifestation requires something material. That is obvious even from that simile picked up at random from the *Kakacūpamasutta*. As for the consciousness of the *arahant*, the verse in question makes it clear that earth, water, fire, and air do not find a footing there. It is because of these four great primaries that one gets a perception of form. They are said to be the cause and condition for the designation of the aggregate of form: *Cattāro kho, bhikkhu, mahābhūtā hetu, cattāro mahābhūtā paccayo rūpakkhandhassa paññāpanāya*.ccxiv[x] "The four great primaries, monk, are the cause and condition for the designation of the form group".

Now the *arahant* has freed his mind from these four elements. As it is said in the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*: *Paṭhavīdhātuyā cittaṃ virājeti*,ccxv[xi] "he makes his mind dispassionate with regard to the earth-element". *Āpodhātuyā cittaṃ virājeti*, "he makes his mind dispassionate with regard to the water-element". As he has freed his mind from the four elements through disenchantment, which makes them fade away, the *arahant's* reflection does not engender a perception of form. As the verse in question puts it rather rhetorically, *ettha āpo ca paṭhavī, tejo vāyo na gādhati*, "herein water and earth, fire and air find no footing".

Here the word *gādhati* is particularly significant. When, for instance, we want to plumb the depth of a deep well, we lower something material as a plumb into the well. Where it comes to stay, we take as the bottom. In the consciousness of the *arahant*, the material elements cannot find such a footing. They cannot manifest themselves in that unplumbed depth of the *arahant's* consciousness.

Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ,

anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,

ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,

tejo vāyo na gādhati.

"Consciousness, which is non-manifestative,

Endless and lustrous on all sides,

It is here that water, earth,

Fire, and air no footing find."

It is precisely because the material elements cannot make themselves manifest in it, that this consciousness is called 'non-manifestative'. In the same connection we may add that such distinctions as long and short, fine and coarse, and pleasant and unpleasant are not registered in that consciousness, because they pertain to things material. When the consciousness is freed from the four elements, it is also free from the relative distinctions, which are but the standards of measurements proper to those elements.

Let us now consider the implications of the term *anantaṃ* - 'endless', 'infinite'. We have already said something about the plumbing of the depth of waters. Since the material elements have faded away in that consciousness, they are unable to plumb its depth. They no longer serve as an '**index**' to that consciousness. Therefore, that consciousness is endless or infinite.

It is endless also in another sense. With regard to such distinctions as 'long' and 'short' we used the word 'relative'. These are relative concepts. We even refer to them as conjoined pairs of terms. In worldly usage they are found conjoined as 'long and short', 'fine and coarse', 'pleasant and unpleasant'. There is a dichotomy about these concepts, there is a bifurcation. It is as if they are put within a rigid framework.

When, for instance, we go searching for a piece of wood for some purpose or other, we may say: "This piece of wood is too long". Why do we say so? Because we are in need of a shorter one. Instead of saying that it is not 'sufficiently' short, we say it is too long. When we say it is too short, what we mean is that it is not sufficiently long. So then, long and short are relevant within one framework. As a matter of fact, all measurements are relative to some scale or other. They are meaningful within some framework of a scale.

In this sense, too, the worldling's way of thinking has a tendency to go to extremes. It goes to one extreme or the other. When it was said that the world, for the most part, rests on a dichotomy, such as that between the two views 'Is' and 'Is not', cexvi[xii] this idea of a framework is already implicit. The worldling's ways of thought 'end-up' in one extreme or the other within this framework. The *arahant* transcends it, his consciousness is, therefore, endless, *ananta*.

There is a verse in the *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga* of the *Udāna*, which clearly brings out this fact. Most of the discourses in that section of the *Udāna* deal with *Nibbāna - Nibbānapaṭisaṃyutta* - and the following verse, too, is found in such a discourse.

Duddasaṃ anantaṃ nāma,
na hi saccaṃ sudassanaṃ,
paṭividdhā taṇhā jānato,
passato natthi kiñcanaṃ. cexvii[xiii]

This verse, like many other deep ones, seems to have puzzled the commentators. Let alone the meaning, even the variant readings had posed them a problem, so much so that they end up giving the reader a choice between alternate interpretations. But let us try to get at the general trend of its meaning.

Duddasaṃ anantaṃ nāma, "hard to see is the endless" - whatever that 'endless' be. *Na hi saccaṃ sudassanaṃ*, "the truth is not easily seen", which in effect is an emphatic assertion of the same idea. One could easily guess that this 'endless' is the truth and that it refers to *Nibbāna*. *Paṭividdhā taṇhā* means that "craving has been penetrated through". This penetration is through knowledge and wisdom, the outcome of which is stated in the last line. *Janato passato natthi kiñcanaṃ*, "to one who know and sees there is NOTHING". The idea is that when craving is penetrated through with knowledge and wisdom, one realizes the voidness of the world. Obviously, the reference here is to *Nibbāna*.

The entire verse may now be rendered as follows:

"Hard to see is the Endless,
Not easy 'tis to see the truth,
Pierced through is craving,

And naught for him who knows and sees."

The commentator, however, is at a loss to determine whether the correct reading is *anataṃ* or *anantaṃ* and leaves the question open. He gives one interpretation in favour of the reading *anataṃ*.ccxviii[xiv] To show its justifiability he says that *natā* is a synonym for *taṇhā*, or craving, and that *anataṃ* is a term for *Nibbāna*, in the sense that there is no craving in it. It must be pointed out that it is *nati* and not *natā* that is used as a synonym for *taṇhā*.

Anyway, after adducing reasons for the acceptability of the reading *anataṃ*, he goes on to say that there is a variant reading, *anantaṃ*, and gives an interpretation in support of it too. In fact, he interprets the word *anantaṃ* in more than one sense. Firstly, because *Nibbāna* is permanent, it has no end. And secondly it is endless because it is immeasurable, or *appamāṇa*.

In our interpretation of the word *anantaṃ* we have not taken it in the sense of permanence or everlastingness. The word *appamāṇa*, or immeasurable, can have various nuances. But the one we have stressed is the transcendence of relative concepts, limited by their dichotomous nature. We have also alluded to the unplumbed depth of the *arahant's* consciousness, in which the four elements do not find a footing.

In the *Buddhavagga* of the *Dhammapada* we come across another verse which highlights the extraordinary significance of the word *anantaṃ*.

Yassa jālinī visattikā,

taṇhā natthi kuhīnci netave,

taṃ Buddham anantagocaraṃ,

apadaṃ kena padena nessatha?ccxix[xv]

Before attempting a translation of this verse, some of the words in it have to be commented upon. *Yassa jālinī visattikā*. *Jālinī* is a synonym for craving. It means one who has a net or one who goes netting. *Visattikā* refers to the agglutinative character of craving. It keeps worldlings glued to objects of sense. The verse may be rendered as follows:

"He who has no craving, with nets in and agglutinates to lead him somewhere - by what track could that Awakened One of infinite range be led - trackless as he is?"

Because the Buddha is of infinite range, he is trackless. His path cannot be traced. Craving wields the net of name-and-form with its glue when it goes ranging. But since the Awakened One has the 'endless' as his range, there is no track to trace him by.

The term *anantagocaraṃ* means one whose range has no end or limit. If, for instance, one chases a deer, to catch it, one might succeed at least at the end of the pasture. But the Buddha's range is endless and his 'ranging' leaves no track.

The commentators seem to interpret this term as a reference to the Buddha's omniscience - to his ability to attend to an infinite number of objects.ccxx[xvi] But this is not the sense in which we interpret the term here. The very fact that there is 'no object' makes the Buddha's range endless and untraceable. Had there been an object, craving could have netted him in. In support of this interpretation, we may allude to the following couple of verses in the *Arahantavagga* of the *Dhammapada*.

*Yesaṃ sannicayo natthi,
ye pariññāta bhojanā,
suññato animitto ca,
vimokkho yesa gocaro,
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ,
gati tesaṃ durannayā.*

*Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā,
āhāre ca anissito,
suññāto animitto ca,
vimokkho yassa gocaro,
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ,
padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ.ccxxi[xvii]*

Both verses express more or less the same idea. Let us examine the meaning of the first verse. The first two lines are: *Yesaṃ sannicayo natthi, ye pariññāta bhojanā*. "Those who have no accumulation and who have comprehended their food". The words used here are charged with deep meanings. Verses in the *Dhammapada* are very often rich in imagery. The Buddha has on many occasions presented the *Dhamma* through deep similes and metaphors. If the metaphorical sense of a term is ignored, one can easily miss the point.

For instance, the word *sannicaya*, in this context, which we have rendered as 'accumulation', is suggestive of the heaping up of the five aggregates. The word *upacaya* is sometimes used with reference to this process of heaping up that goes on in the minds of the worldlings.ccxxii[xviii] Now this heaping up, as well as the accumulation of *kamma*, is not there in the case of an *arahant*. Also, they have comprehended their food. The comprehension of food does not mean simply the usual reflection on food in terms of elements. Nor does it imply just one kind of food, but all the four nutriments mentioned in the *Dhamma*, namely *kabalīṅkārāhāra*, material food, *phassa*, contact, *manosañcetanā*, volition, and *viññāṇa*, consciousness.ccxxiii[xix]

The next two lines tell us what the true range or pasture of the *arahants* is. It is an echo of the idea of comprehension of food as well as the absence of accumulation. *Suññato animitto ca, vimokkho yesa gocaro*, "whose range is the deliverance of the void and the signless". When the *arahants* are in their attainment to the fruit of *arahant*-hood, their minds turn towards the void and the signless. When they are on this feeding-ground, neither *Māra* nor craving can catch them with their nets. They are trackless - hence the last two lines *ākāse va sakuntānaṃ, gati tesa durannayā*, "their track is hard to trace, like that of birds in the sky".

The word *gati* in this last line is interpreted by the commentators as a reference to the 'whereabouts' of the *arahants* after their *parinibbāna*.ccxxiv[xx] It has dubious associations of some place as a destination. But in this context, *gati* does not lend itself to such an interpre-

tation. It only refers to their mental compass, which is untraceable, because of their deliverance through the void and the signless.

The next verse also brings out this idea. *Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā, āhāre ca anissito*, "whose influxes are extinct and who is unattached in regard to nutriment". *Suññāto animitto ca, vimokkho yassa gocaro*, "whose range is the void and the signless". *Ākāse va sakuntānaṃ, padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ*, "his path is hard to trace, like that of birds in the sky". This reminds us of the last line of the verse quoted earlier, *apadaṃ kena padena nessatha*, "by what track could one lead him, who is trackless"?^{ccxxv[xxi]} These two verses, then, throw more light on the meaning of the expression *anantagocara* - of infinite range - used as an epithet for the Awakened One.

Let us now get at the meaning of the term *sabbato pabham*, in the context *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*.^{ccxxvi[xxii]} In our discussion of the significance of the drama and the cinema we mentioned that it is the darkness in the background which keeps the audience entranced in a way that they identify themselves with the characters and react accordingly.^{ccxxvii[xxiii]} The darkness in the background throws a spell of delusion. That is what makes for 'enjoyment'.

Of course, there is some sort of light in the cinema hall. But that is very limited. Some times it is only a beam of light, directed on the screen. In a previous sermon we happened to mention that even in the case of a matinee show, dark curtains and closed doors and windows ensure the necessary dark background.^{ccxxviii[xxiv]} Here, in this simile, we have a clue to the meaning *sabbato pabham*, luminous or lustrous on all sides. Suppose a matinee show is going on and one is enjoying it, entranced and deluded by it. Suddenly doors and windows are flung open and the dark curtains are removed. Then immediately one slips out of the cinema world. The film may go on, but because of the light coming from all sides, the limited illumination on the screen fades away, before the total illumination. The film thereby loses its enjoyable quality.

As far as consciousness, or *viññāna*, is concerned, it is not something completely different from wisdom, *paññā*, as it is defined in the *Mahāvedallasutta*. However, there is also a difference between them, *paññā bhāvetabbā, viññānaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*, "wisdom is to be developed, consciousness is to be comprehended".^{ccxxix[xxv]} Here it is said that one has to comprehend the nature of consciousness.

Then one may ask: 'We are understanding everything with consciousness, so how can one understand consciousness?' But the Buddha has shown us the way of doing it. Wisdom, when it is developed, enables one to comprehend consciousness. In short, consciousness is as narrow as that beam of light falling on the cinema screen. That is to say, the specifically prepared consciousness, or the consciousness crammed up in name-and-form, as in the case of the non-*arahant*. It is as narrow as the perspective of the audience glued to the screen. The consciousness of the ordinary worldling is likewise limited and committed.

Now what happens when it is fully illuminated on all sides with wisdom? It becomes *sabbato pabham*, lustrous on all sides. In that lustre, which comes from all sides, the framework of ignorance fades away. It is that released consciousness, free from the dark framework of ignorance, that is called the consciousness which is lustrous on all sides, in that cryptic verse in question. This lustre, associated with wisdom, has a special significance according to the discourses. In the *Catukkanipāta* of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* we come across the following *sutta*:

Catasso imā, bhikkhave, pabhā. Katamā catasso? Candappabhā, suriyappabhā, aggippabhā, paññāpabhā. Imā kho, bhikkhave, catasso pabhā. Etad aggaṃ, bhikkhave, imāsaṃ catunnaṃ pabhānaṃ yadidaṃ paññāpabhā. ccxxx[xxvi] "Monks, there are these four lustres. Which four? The lustre of the moon, the lustre of the sun, the lustre of fire, and the lustre of wisdom. These, monks, are the four lustres. This, monks, is the highest among these four lustres, namely the lustre of wisdom."

Another important discourse, quoted quite often, though not always correctly interpreted, is the following:

Pabhassaram idaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. Tasmā assutavato puthujanassa citta bhāvanā natthī'ti vadāmi.

Pabhassaram idaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vipparamuttaṃ. Taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa citta bhāvanā atthī'ti vadāmi. ccxxxii[xxvii]

"This mind, monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by extraneous defilements. That, the uninstructed ordinary man does not understand as it is. Therefore, there is no mind development for the ordinary man, I declare.

This mind, monks, is luminous, but it is released from extraneous defilements. That, the instructed noble disciple understands as it is. Therefore, there is mind development for the instructed noble disciple, I declare."

It is sufficiently clear, then, that the allusion is to the luminous mind, the consciousness of the *arahant*, which is non-manifestative, infinite, and all lustrous. To revert to the analogy of the cinema which, at least in a limited sense, helps us to form an idea about it, we have spoken about the stilling of all preparations. ccxxxii[xxviii] Now in the case of the film, too, there is a stilling of preparations. That is to say, the preparations which go to make it a 'movie' film are 'stilled'. The multicoloured dresses of actors and actresses become colourless before that illumination, even in the case of a technicolour film. The scenes on the screen get blurred before the light that suddenly envelops them.

And what is the outcome of it? The preparations going on in the minds of the audience, whether induced by the film producers or aroused from within, are calmed down at least temporarily. This symbolizes, in a limited sense, the significance of the phrase *sabbasaṅkhārasamatha*, the stilling of all preparations.

Then what about the relinquishment of all assets, *sabbūpadhipaṭinissagga*? In the context of the film show, it is the bundle of experiences coming out of one's 'vested-interests' in the marvellous cinema world. These assets are relinquished at least for the moment. Destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhayo*, is momentarily experienced with regard to the blurred scenes on the screen.

As to the term *virāga*, we have already shown that it can be understood in two senses, that is, dispassion as well as the fading away which brings about the dispassion. ccxxxiii[xxix] Now in this case, too, the fading away occurred, not by any other means, but by the very fact that the limited narrow beam of consciousness got superseded by the unlimited light of wisdom.

Nirodha means cessation, and the film has now ceased to be a film, though the machines are still active. We have already mentioned that in the last analysis a film is produced by the audience.ccxxxiv[xxx] So its cessation, too, is a matter for the audience. This, then, is the cessation of the film.

Now comes *Nibbāna*, extinction or extinguishment. Whatever heated emotions and delirious excitements that arose out of the film show cooled down, at least momentarily, when the illumination takes over. This way we can form some idea, somewhat inferentially, about the meaning and significance of the term *sabbato pabhaṃ*, with the help of this illustration based on the film show.

So now we have tackled most of the difficulties to the interpretation of this verse. In fact, it is the few words occurring in the first two lines that has posed an insoluble problem to scholars both eastern and western. We have not yet given the commentarial interpretation, and that, not out of disrespect for the venerable commentators. It is because their interpretation is rather hazy and inconclusive. However, we shall be presenting that interpretation at the end of this discussion, so as to give the reader an opportunity to compare it with ours.

But for the present, let us proceed to say something about the last two lines as well. *Viññāṇassa nirodhena, etth'etaṃ uparujjhati*. As we saw above, for all practical purposes, name-and-form seem to cease, even like the fading away of the scenes on the cinema screen. Then what is meant by this phrase *viññāṇassa nirodhena*, with the cessation of consciousness? The reference here is to that *abhisankhata viññāṇa*, or the specifically prepared consciousness. It is the cessation of that concocted type of consciousness which was formerly there, like the one directed on the cinema screen by the audience. With the cessation of that specifically prepared consciousness, all constituents of name-and-form are said to be held in check, *uparujjhati*.

Here, too, we have a little problem. Generally, *nirujjhati* and *uparujjhati* are regarded as synonymous. The way these two verbs are used in some *suttas* would even suggest that they mean the same thing. As a matter of fact, even the *CūḷaNiddesa*, which is a very old commentary, paraphrases *uparujjhati* by *nirujjhati*: *uparujjhatī'ti nirujjhati*.ccxxxv[xxx]

Nevertheless, in the context of this particular verse, there seems to be something deep involved in the distinction between these two verbs. Even at a glance, the two lines in question are suggestive of some distinction between them. *Viññāṇassa nirodhena, etth'etaṃ uparujjhati*, the *nirodha* of consciousness is said to result in the *uparodha* of whatever constitutes name-and-form. This is intriguing enough.

But that is not all. By way of preparing the background for the discussion, we have already made a brief allusion to the circumstances in which the Buddha uttered this verse.ccxxxvi[xxxii] What provided the context for its utterance was a riddle that occurred to a certain monk in a moment of fancy. The riddle was: 'Where do these four great primaries cease altogether?' There the verb used is *nirujjhanti*.ccxxxvii[xxxiii] So in order to find where they cease, he whimsically went from heaven to heaven and from *Brahma*-world to *Brahma*-world. As we mentioned earlier, too, it was when the *Mahā Brahma* directed that monk to the Buddha, saying: 'Why 'on earth' did you come all this way when the Buddha is there to ask?', that the Buddha reworded the question. He pointed out that the question was incorrectly worded and revised it as follows, before venturing to answer it:

Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī,

tejo vāyo na gādhati,

kattha dīghañca rassañca,

aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,

kattha nāmañca rūpañca,

asesaṃ uparujjhati? ccxxxviii[xxxiv]

The word used by the Buddha in this revised version is *uparujjhati* and not *nirujjhati*. Yet another innovation is the use of the term *na gādhati*. Where do water, earth, fire, and air find no footing? Or where do they not get established? In short, here is a word suggestive of plumbing the depth of a reservoir. We may hark back to the simile given earlier, concerning the plumbing of the consciousness with the perception of form. Where do the four elements not find a footing? Also, where are such relative distinctions as long and short, subtle and gross, pleasant and unpleasant, as well as name-and-form, completely held in check?

In this restatement of the riddle, the Buddha has purposely avoided the use of the verb *nirujjhati*. Instead, he had recourse to such terms as *na gādhati*, ‘does not find a footing’, ‘does not plumb’, and *uparujjhati*, ‘is held in check’, or ‘is cut off’. This is evidence enough to infer that there is a subtle distinction between the nuances associated with the two verbs *nirujjhati* and *uparujjhati*.

What is the secret behind this peculiar usage? The problem that occurred to this monk is actually of the type that the materialists of today conceive of. It is, in itself, a fallacy. To say that the four elements **cease** somewhere in the world, or in the universe, is a contradiction in terms. Why? Because the very question: ‘Where do they cease?’, presupposes an answer in terms of those elements, by way of defining that place. This is the kind of uncouth question an ordinary materially inclined person would ask.

That is why the Buddha reformulated the question, saying: ‘Monk, that is not the way to put the question. You should not ask ‘where’ the four great primaries cease, but rather where they, as well as the concepts of long and short, subtle and gross, pleasant and unpleasant, and name-and-form, are held in check.’ The question proper is not where the four great primaries cease, but where they do not get established and where all their accompaniments are held in check.

Here, then, we see the Buddha relating the concept of matter, which the world takes for granted, to the perception of form arising in the mind. The four great primaries haunt the minds of the worldlings like ghosts, so they have to be exorcised from their minds. It is not a question of expelling them from this world, or from any heavenly realm, or the entire world-system. That exorcism should take place in this very consciousness, so as to put an end to this haunting.

Before the light of wisdom those ghosts, namely the four great primaries, become ineffective. It is in the darkness of ignorance that these ghosts haunt the worldlings with the perception of form. They keep the minds of the worldlings bound, glued, committed and limited. What happens now is that the specifically prepared consciousness, which was bound, glued, committed and limited, becomes fully released, due to the light of wisdom, to become non-manifestative, endless, and lustrous on all sides. So, to sum up, we may render the verse in question as follows:

"Consciousness, which is non-manifestative,

Endless, lustrous on all sides,
Here it is that earth and water,
Fire and air no footing find,
Here it is that long and short,
Fine and coarse, pleasant, unpleasant,
And name-and-form,
Are cut off without exception,
When consciousness has surceased,
These are held in check herein."

Though we ventured to translate the verse, we have not yet given the commentarial interpretation of it. Since this might seem a shortcoming, we shall now present what the commentator has to say on this verse.

Venerable *Buddhaghosa*, before coming to this verse in his commentary to the *Kevaddhasutta*, gives an explanation as to why the Buddha reformulated the original question of that monk. According to him, the question: 'Where do the four great primaries cease?', implied both the organic and the inorganic aspects of matter, and in revising it, the Buddha limited its scope to the organic. In other words, Venerable *Buddhaghosa* presumes that the revised version has to be interpreted with reference to this human body. Hence he explains such words as 'long' and 'short', occurring in the verse, in a limited sense as referring to the body's stature. How facile this interpretation turns out to be, one can easily discern as we go on.

Venerable *Buddhaghosa* keeps on reminding the reader that the questions are relevant only to the organic realm, *upādinnaṃ yeva sandhāya pucchati*. ccxxxix[xxxv] So he interprets the terms *dīghañca rassañca*, long and short, as relative distinctions of a person's height, that is tallness and shortness. Similarly, the words *aṇuṃ thūlaṃ*, subtle and gross, are said to mean the small and big in the size of the body. Likewise *subha* and *asubhaṃ* are taken to refer to the comely and the ugly in terms of body's appearance.

The explanation given to the phrase *nāmañca rūpañca* is the most astounding of all. *Nāma* is said to be the name of the person and *rūpa* is his form or shape. All this goes to show that the commentator has gone off at a tangent, even in the interpretation of this verse, which is more or less the prologue to such an intricate verse as the one in question. He has blundered at the very outset in limiting the scope of those relative terms to the organic, thereby obscuring the meaning of that deep verse.

The significance of these relative terms, from the linguistic point of view, has been overlooked. Words like *dīghaṃ/rassaṃ* and *aṇuṃ/ thūlaṃ* do not refer to the stature and size of some person. What they convey is the dichotomous nature of concepts in the world. All those deeper implications are obscured by the reference to a person's outward appearance. The confusion becomes worse confounded, when *nāmañca rūpañca* is interpreted as the name and the shape of a person. So the stage is already set for a shallow interpretation, even before presenting the verse beginning with *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*.

It is on such an unsound premise that the commentator bases his interpretation of the verse in question. We shall try to do justice to that exposition, too. It might necessitate a fair amount of quotations, though it is difficult to be comprehensive in this respect.

The commentator begins his exposition with the word *viññāṇaṃ* itself. He comes out with a peculiar etymology: *Viññāṇan'ti tattha viññātabbanti viññāṇaṃ nibbānassa nāmaṃ*, which means that the word *viññāṇa*, or consciousness, is in this context a synonym for *Nibbāna*, in the sense that it is 'to be known', *viññātabbaṃ*. This forced etymology is far from convincing, since such a usage is not attested elsewhere. Moreover, we come across a long list of epithets for *Nibbāna*, as many as thirty-three, in the *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, but *viññāṇa* is not counted as one.ccxl[xxxvi] In fact, nowhere in the discourses is *viññāṇa* used as a synonym for *Nibbāna*.

Next, he takes up the word *anidassana*, and makes the following comment: *Tad etaṃ nidassanābhāvato anidassanaṃ*, that *Nibbāna* is called *anidassana* because no illustration for it could be given. The idea is that it has nothing to compare with. Then comes the explanation of the word *anantaṃ*. According to the commentator *Nibbāna* is called *ananta*, endless, because it has neither the arising-end, *uppādanto*, nor the falling-end, *vayanto*, nor the otherwiseness of the persisting-end, *ṭhitassa aññathatta*. Strangely enough, even the last mentioned middle-state is counted as an 'end' in the commentators concept of three ends. So this is the substance of his commentary to the first three words *viññāṇaṃ*, *anidassanaṃ*, *anantaṃ*.

The commentarial interpretation of the term *sabbato pabhaṃ* is even more confusing. The word *pabhā* is explained as a synonym for *papa*, meaning 'ford'. The *bha* element in the word, he explains, is a result of consonantal interchange with the original *pa* in *papa*. *Pakā-rassa pana bhakāro kato*. The idea is that the original form of this particular term for *Nibbāna* is *sabbato papaṃ*. The meaning attributed to it is 'with fords on all sides'. *Nibbāna* is supposed to be metaphorically conceived as the ocean, to get down into which there are fords on all sides, namely the thirty-eight topics of meditation. This interpretation seems rather far fetched. It is as if the commentator has resorted to this simile of a ford, because he is already 'in deep waters'! The word *pabhā*, as it is, clearly means light, or radiance, and its association with wisdom is also well attested in the canon.

Though in his commentary to the *Dīgha Nikāya* Venerable *Buddhaghosa* advances the above interpretation, in his commentary to the *Majjhima Nikāya* he seems to have had second thoughts on the problem. In the *Brahmanimantanikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, also, the first two lines of the verse, *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*, occur.ccxli[xxxvii] But here the commentator follows a different line of interpretation. Whereas in his commentary to the *Kevaḍḍhasutta* he explains *anidassanaṃ* as an epithet of *Nibbāna*, in the sense of having nothing to compare with, here he takes it in the sense of not being visible to the eye. *Cakkhuvīññāṇassa āpāthaṃ anupagamanato anidassanaṃ nāma,ccxlii[xxxviii]* "it is called *anidassana* because it does not come within the range of eye-consciousness".

In explaining the term *sabbato pabhaṃ*, he suggests several alternative interpretations. In the first interpretation, he takes *pabhā* to mean light, or lustre. *Sabbato pabhan'ti sabbato pabhāsampannaṃ. Nibbānato hi añño dhammo sappabhataro vā jotivantataro vā parisuddhataro vā paṇḍarataro vā natthi*. "*Sabbato pabhaṃ* means more lustrous than anything else. For there is nothing more lustrous or luminous or purer or whiter than *Nibbāna*". In this interpretation *Nibbāna* is even regarded as something white in colour!

The etymology of the term *sabbato pabhaṃ* has been given a twist, for the word *sabbato* is taken in a comparative sense, 'more lustrous than anything'. As we have pointed out, the term actually means 'lustrous on all sides'. Then a second interpretation is given, bringing in

the word *pabhū*, 'lord' or 'chief'. *Sabbato vā pabhū*, that is to say more prominent than anything else. In support of it he says: *Asukadisāya nāma nibbānaṃ natthī'ti na vattabbaṃ*, "it should not be said that in such and such a direction *Nibbāna* is not to be found". He says that it is called *pabhū*, or lord, because it is to be found in all directions. Only as the third interpretation he cites his simile of the ford already given in his commentary to the *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.

What is the reason for giving so many figurative interpretations as alternatives to such a significant verse? Surely the Buddha would not have intended the verse to convey so many conflicting meanings, when he preached it.

No doubt the commentators have made a great effort to preserve the *Dhamma*, but due to some unfortunate historical circumstances, most of the deep discourses dealing with the subject of *Nibbāna* have been handed down without even a clue to the correct version among variant readings. This has left the commentators nonplussed, so much so that they had to give us several vague and alternative interpretations to choose from. It is up to us to decide, whether we should accept this position as it is, or try to improve on it by exploring any other possible means of explanation.

We had occasion to mention in our very first sermon that the Buddha himself has prophesied that those discourses which deal with voidness would, in time to come, go into disuse, with their deeper meanings obscured. [xxxix] The interpretations just quoted go to show that already the prediction has come true to a great extent.

The phrase we quoted from the *Brahmanimantanikasutta* with its reference to *anidassana viññāna* occurs in a context which has a significance of its own. The relevant paragraph, therefore, deserves some attention. It runs as follows:

Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ, taṃ paṭhaviyā paṭhavittena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassa vāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ, pajāpatissa pajāpatittena ananubhūtaṃ, brahmānaṃ brahmattena ananubhūtaṃ, ābhassarānaṃ ābhassarattena ananubhūtaṃ, subhakiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhattena ananubhūtaṃ, vehapphalānaṃ vehapphalatte ananubhūtaṃ, abhibhussa abhibhuttena ananubhūtaṃ, sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ. [xl]

"Consciousness which makes nothing manifest, infinite and all lustrous, it does not partake of the earthiness of earth, the wateriness of water, the fieriness of fire, the airiness of air, the creature-hood of creatures, the *deva*-hood of *devas*, the *Pajāpati*-hood of *Pajāpati*, the *Brahma*-hood of *Brahma*, the radiance of the Radiant Ones, the *Subhakiṇha*-hood of the *Subhakiṇha Brahmas*, the *Vehapphala*-hood of the *Vehapphala Brahmas*, the overlord-ship of the overlord, and the all-ness of the all."

This peculiar paragraph, listing thirteen concepts, seems to convey something deep about the nature of the non-manifestative consciousness. That consciousness does not partake of the earthiness of earth, the wateriness of water, the fieriness of fire, and the airiness of air. That is to say, the nature of the four elements does not inhere in this consciousness, they do not manifest themselves in it. Similarly, the other concepts, like *deva*-hood, *Brahma*-hood, etc., which the worldlings take seriously as real, have no applicability or validity here.

The special significance of this assertion lies in the context in which the Buddha declared it. It is to dispel a wrong view that *Baka* the *Brahma* conceived, in regarding his *Brahma* status as permanent, ever lasting and eternal, that the Buddha made this declaration before

that *Brahma* himself in the *Brahma* world. The whole point of the discourse, then, is to challenge the wrong view of the *Brahma*, by asserting that the non-manifestative consciousness of the *arahant* is above the worldly concepts of elements and divinity and the questionable reality attributed to them. In other words, they do not manifest themselves in it. They are transcended.
