

forth. Thereby one does not take seriously those two pegs between which perception occurs. One avoids thinking in terms of subject and object - 'There is that form there, and here am I'; 'There is that sound there, and here am I. Avoiding that way of thinking, one understands experience simply as a process of seeing and hearing. But there is something far more subtle which leads one towards perception and that is, contact or 'phassa'. The arising of contact is an extremely subtle phenomenon. What is generally understood as contact is the striking together of two things. So, the notion of duality is already implicit there. But this of course is the worldly way of understanding the phenomenon of contact. That is why the Buddha also sometimes gives the illustration of the striking together of two pieces of wood as a simile for the phenomenon of contact. To contact or to strike together there has to be two. The presence of two things is already presupposed.

There is, however, an important sutta in Majjhima Nikāya which gives us a deeper insight into this phenomenon of contact. It is the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta. There we read:

'Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā ...'

'Dependent on eye and forms, there arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is contact, dependent on contact is feeling ...' and so forth. It is the first few words that convey something extremely deep.

'Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ. Here we have the two words 'paṭicca' and 'uppajjati' which remind us of the term 'paṭiccasamuppāda'. 'Paṭicca' means 'dependent on' or 'because of'. What is implied here is that consciousness is not something existing in itself or by itself. It is not something abstract. It always arises dependent on something or other, because of something or other. 'Paṭicca' conveys the idea of relationship or relativity.

For instance, eye-consciousness is a relationship between the eye, the internal base, and forms, the external base. Here, then, we already have an

instance of 'paṭicca samuppāda' - the law of Dependent Arising. Consciousness has been compared to a conjuror's trick - to a magic-show. One has to get an insight into the back-stage workings of this magic-show. There are the six dependently arisen consciousnesses with mind-consciousness as the sixth. In the phrase quoted above, the emphasis should be placed on the word 'paṭicca'. "Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ. Eye-consciousness arises dependent on eye and form and not independently.

Apparently, here again, we are faced with the question of two things, but then let us take a peep into the backstage workings of consciousness. What is called 'consciousness' is a form of discrimination. In fact, consciousness itself is the very discrimination between an internal base and an external base - eye and forms, ear and sounds and so on.

But the irony of the situation is this: The very discrimination implies the ignoring of the relationship. That is why the birth of consciousness is in itself the birth of ignorance. Given this ignorance, there is the possibility of counting the three factors - eye, forms and eye-consciousness. This, then, is the triad - the three that are coming together to bring about contact.

'Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso'. This is the most basic reckoning - 'phassa paññatti' which implies the counting as a three. This might well appear as an extremely subtle problem for the logician. It is because of eye and forms that eye-consciousness has arisen. But once eye-consciousness has arisen, there is the tendency to forget - to ignore - the relationship and to make a reckoning in which the third factor - the 'tertium-quad' - is that very discrimination, 'eye-consciousness'. In other words, there is an implicit ignorance of the fact that consciousness is dependently-arisen. Once this reckoning of the three as eye, forms, and eye-consciousness is taken seriously, the stage is set for 'contact' - 'tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso'. The coming-together of the three is contact.

In fact it is not simply a coming-together; it is a going-together as well. It is a concurrence. So long as the three go together in ignorance, there is

contact. There is a possibility of a situation called 'contact.' Earlier, we were talking about two things to define 'contact.' But here we seem to have three things. But there is no contradiction. What is meant is that there is an ignorance of the fact that eye-consciousness which forms the third is arisen dependent on the other two.

When eye becomes self conscious, it separates itself from forms, and these are the two ends. With these two ends as pegs, a measuring goes on which we call percepts, concepts and knowledge. But in this so-called knowledge, the duality is already implicit. There is a dichotomy between an 'internal' and an 'external'—between a subject and an object. That is why there is a need for a more refined way of mental-noting in order to get rid of this delusion.

Now let us take the case of a mirage. When a deer sees a mirage at a distance, it does not know. It is ignorant of the fact that it is a mirage. Thirsty as it is, it imagines the mirage to be water. Its vision is biased and unclear. It lacks the wisdom to understand the nature of the phenomenon which we call 'a mirage'. It perceives and conceives water in the mirage. In the language of the deer, the mirage would be called 'water.' Just as in the world people call each other 'man' or 'woman', so the deer would call the mirage 'water.' If we are to take seriously the duality and say: 'the form is out there and I am here, the sound is out there and I am here,' we will be in a similar position. So actually what we have here is just a bit of bare experience. That too comes about by giving recognition to the two ends - the internal base and the external base. By recognizing them, by separating them, by discriminating between them, there arises a certain measuring. So the concept of two things striking together also follows as a matter of course. Given two things, there is a possibility of a contact between them. And this is 'contact' as the world understands it. Given this contact, there arise dependent on it, feeling, perception and all the rest of it. It goes as far as thinking and logic.

Now, this is the delusion. This is the ignorance. What, then, is the insight that helps one to unravel this state of affairs? It is the understanding of the

conditioned nature of consciousness - that consciousness arises dependent on conditions. Even that insight emerges through a refined way of attending. That is, by accelerating the mental noting in such a way as not to get caught in the net of perception or *saññā*. In other words, to stop short at bare awareness. It is by such a technique that one can get an insight into the back stage workings of consciousness. For instance, the insight that the eye-consciousness arises dependent on eye and forms and that the very discrimination between the two ends is eye-consciousness, which is the middle. This story of the two ends and the middle is beautifully presented in the Pārāyaṇa Sutta found in the Section of the Sixes in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. What forms the nucleus of that sutta is the following verse quoted from the Pārāyaṇa Vagga of the Sutta Nipāta:

'Yo ubhante viditvāna - majjhe mantā na lippati,
Taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti - so'dha sibbanimaccagā'

This verse preached by the Buddha in reply to a question put by Brahmin Tissa Metteyya, is quoted here for comment. In a sort of a 'seminar' on the significance of this verse, six monks put forward their individual opinions thereby drawing out the deeper implications of the verse in question. The meaning of the verse, as it stands, would be something like this:

'Yo ubhante viditvāna' - He who having understood both ends,
'Majjhe mantā na lippati' - Does not get attached to the middle through wisdom.
'Taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti' - Him I call a great man
'So idha sibbanim accagā' - It is he who has bypassed or escaped the seamstress in this world.

'Sibbanī' or 'seamstress' is a term for craving. The function of craving is conceived here as a process of stitching or weaving. The underlying idea is the accumulation of knots. It is craving that is responsible for the knotty nature of this existence. The two ends and the middle referred to in this verse are just the things necessary for making a knot. The significance of the two ends and the middle has been variously interpreted in this sutta. According to one interpretation that came up at this symposium, the one-

end means the six internal bases and the second end means the six external bases and the middle is consciousness.

By consciousness is meant the six kinds of sense-consciousness. So according to this interpretation too, we find that consciousness becomes the middle as a result of reckoning the sense and its object as two ends. It is as if two pegs have been driven as eye and forms for the measuring that is implicit in sense-perception.

The arising of this basic discrimination is called the arising of the sense-bases - 'āyatanuppāda'. And the insight into this basic discrimination is called the seeing of the arising of sense-bases. In the Sōṇa Sutta, among the Sixes of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, we find the following significant verse:

Tañhakkhayādhimuttassa
Asammohaṇca cetaso

Disvā āyatanuppādān
Sammā cittaṃ vimuccati

'In one who is intent upon the destruction of craving and the non-delusion of the mind, on seeing the arising of sense-bases, the mind is well released.'

One may well infer from this verse that it is by the not-seeing of the arising of the bases that one remains bound - that the mind remains bound to saṃsāra. As we mentioned above, so long as there is no proper understanding of the two-ends, a middle creeps in. So long as one grasps eye and forms as the two ends, eye-consciousness comes in. That is because what is called eye-consciousness is the very discrimination of eye and form as two things. Now, in the case of the mirage, the deer thinks: 'I am here, the water is out there.' It is with this presumption that the deer runs towards the mirage. But from the very outset, this discrimination, this consciousness of water, is wrong. Therefore the deer keeps on running after the mirage. It is a vain pursuit. The more it approaches the more its object recedes. This is the nature of a mirage. But what impels the deer in its pursuit is its eye-consciousness. This consciousness acts like two pegs. So the deer thinks:

'Here is my eye and there is that water. If only I can go there, I can see that real water and drink it!' In course the process of creation was going on all the time. Of course the process of creation was going on all the time. Of course the process of creation was going on all the time. Similarly, when we grasp eye and forms as the two ends, we have driven the two pegs down to the earth, as it were. We have taken eye and forms as real. That very discrimination is eye-consciousness.

The best revelation of this state of affairs comes when one has accelerated one's speed of mental-noting to such an extent that when a thought comes to one's mind, one summarily dismisses it as a mere thinking without being carried away by it. Thereby one does not allow that thought to crystallize itself as an object. Normally, an object is something that one clings to or hangs on to. The mind which has been in the habit of clinging throughout saṃsāra, always seeks to hang on to something or the other, however frail it may be. That is because of the craving for existence. Just as a man falling down a precipice would hang on even to the frail straw for fear of the fall, the ever-new regenerator, craving - 'taṇhā ponobhavikā' - prompts one to hang on to this that or the other. But the crux of the problem lies where the mind meets its object.

Mind has the habit of hanging on to its object. Even when the five external senses do not grasp their respective objects, mind would grasp the thought as its object. One tends to think: 'Here am I, the thinker, and this is my mind-object.' So long as this bifurcation, this duality, is there, there will also be a place for mind-consciousness. In the magic-show of consciousness, mind-consciousness is the subtlest trick of all. Now in the verse quoted above, it is said that the mind is well released on seeing the arising of bases. How does this come about? When the meditator attends to the objects of the six senses rapidly and in a more refined way, without clinging to them, summarily dismissing them, in the course of his meditative attention - all of a sudden - he discovers the mind-object as soon as it strikes the mind. The relativity involved in the process of sense-contact is thereby understood and the delusion regarding the magic-show of consciousness is dispelled. Strange as it may appear, this very insight into the dependent arising of sense bases has dismantled those very sense-bases.

as it were. Of course, the process of cessation was going on all the time. But due to the regenerator, - craving - which had a partiality for the arising aspect, the fact of cessation was not seen. As it is said in Dvayatānupassanā Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta:

'Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā
Ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino
Nirodham appajānantā
Āgantāro punabbhavaṃ'

'Those beings who approach realms of form and those that are in formless realms, not understanding well the fact of cessation, come again and again to existence.'

What is meant is that impelled by craving, beings are always keen on ever-new arisings to the neglect of the fact of cessation. As soon as a thing breaks up, craving prompts: "Don't worry about this thing that is lost. Take hold of that thing out there." This renewing process goes on so rapidly in the mind, that the process of mental-noting is something like a battle with Māra. One has to speed up the process of mental-noting in such a way as to eliminate the possibilities of attachment and clinging. In fact, it would be at a totally unexpected moment that the releasing insight breaks forth. But once that insight dawns, one understands for the first time the delusion one has been in, all this time. Consciousness arises dependent on conditions. There is no 'I' in it. This way, one sees the law of Paṭiccasamuppāda with the help of the six sense-bases. This is the significance of the phrase: "Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ" quoted above.

Eye-consciousness arises dependent on eye and forms. And likewise, mind-consciousness arises dependent on mind and mind-objects. So long as this fact is not seen, there is a tendency to imagine three things in this situation - 'tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso', 'the concurrence of the three is contact.' This concurrence or the going-together is actually a going-together of the delusion of the three. So this insight may be called the understanding of

contact or the understanding of consciousness or the understanding of perception.

In short, it is the understanding of Paṭiccasamuppāda - the Dependent Arising. Though it is the illusion of the mirage that tempts the deer, what prompts its vain pursuit is a delusion. It is when one understands this delusion concerning the sense-bases that one attains to the influx-free position of the Arahant - the extinction of influxes. The tendency to grasp and cling which leads to grips and knots wears off. That is why it was said: 'Saññāvirattassa na santi ganthā' - 'to one detached from sense-perception there are no knots.' This is the release from 'Saññā' or perception. It was also said: 'paññāvimuttassa na santi mohā' - 'to one released through wisdom, there are no delusions. It is in the light of wisdom that one discovers the secret of consciousness.'

'Viññānaṃ pariññeyyaṃ, paññā bhāvetabbā' - 'consciousness is to be comprehended and wisdom is to be developed.'

It is by the development of wisdom that one comes to understand the true state of affairs with regard to consciousness. It is something like taking a peep into the backstage workings of a magic-show. Wisdom is something penetrative ('nibbedhikā paññā'). In fact, the culmination of all endeavours is the development of wisdom. Wisdom is the crest-gem. 'Paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ' - 'Wisdom is the jewel of mankind.' It is only through wisdom that one can understand the delusion involved in consciousness. In the last analysis, the murk of delusion, the darkness of ignorance, is dispelled only by the radiance of wisdom.

The Buddha has declared that there are four radiances in the world - the radiance of the moon, the radiance of the sun, the radiance of fire and lastly the radiance of wisdom - 'paññāppabhā'. He proclaimed that out of these four, the last, the radiance of wisdom is the highest. It is the highest because

4. Mahāvedalla Sutta, M.N. I 293 (P.T.S)

5. Ajarasa Sutta, S.N. I 36 (P.T.S)

6. Ābhā Sutta, A.N. II 139f (P.T.S)

the darkness of ignorance is dispelled only by it. The influx-free arahant's mind is radiant with that radiance of wisdom. So it is said "khīṇāsavā jutimantā". The fermenting influxes which make for intoxication are destroyed and with the insight into the nature of consciousness through wisdom, his mind is radiant. Now, all this shows that to see 'Paṭiccasamuppāda' is to be free from it. In this Law of Dependent Arising, there are two aspects - arising (samudaya) and cessation (nirodha). Out of these two aspects, if one has seen the arising aspect, then and there, one has already got an insight into the fact of cessation. One understands that whatever is of a nature to arise is also of a nature to cease. 'Yaṃ kiñci samudayaḍhammā, sabbantaṃ nirodhadhammā'.

What prevents this insight is that grasping or 'upādāna'. Generally in the world, very few are keen on emptying the well. The majority simply draw water to make use of it. But there is no end to this making use of the water. Only when one decides upon emptying the well, will one be drawing water just to throw it away without grasping. This is the position of those who are keen on seeing the emptiness of the world, and it is they that are fully appeased in the world. The word 'parinibbutā' in this context does not mean that the arahants have passed away. They live in the world fully appeased, having extinguished the fires of lust, hate and delusion.

The word 'upādāna' has two senses - 'grasping' as well as 'fuel that catches fire'. In fact, the totality of existence is a raging fire kept up by the fuel of 'upādāna'. 'Bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ'. The realization of the cessation of existence is at the same time, the extinction of that raging fire which brings an appeasement. Therefore the Arahants are those that dwell fully appeased in the world, having extinguished those fires.

'Yesāṃ sambodhi āṅgesu - sammā cittāṃ subhāvitaṃ'
Ādānaṇaṇaṇissagge - anupādāya ye ratā
Khīṇāsavā jutimantā - te loke parinibbutā'