

Questions & Answers

On Dhamma



Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda

Questions & Answers On Dhamma

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

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How does a bhikkhu know the ford? Here a bhikkhu goes from time to time to such bhikkhus who have learned much, who are well versed in the tradition, who maintain the Dhamma, the Discipline, and the Codes, and he enquires and asks questions of them thus: 'How is this, venerable sir? What is the meaning of this?' These venerable ones reveal to him what has not been revealed, clarify what is not clear, and remove his doubts about numerous things that give rise to doubt. That is how a bhikkhu knows the ford.

- MAHĀGOPĀLAKA SUTTA (MN 33)

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Introduction

This is a collection of my correspondence with readers preserved over the years. They have been put together as a book in the hope that it will clarify some deep points for those with inquisitive minds who wish to delve deep into the depths of the Dhamma. Except in a few instances, we have substituted the initials for the names of the questioners. The majority of the correspondence were in English. Only three were in Sinhala.

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

*Sanghopasthāna Suwa Sevana
Kirillawala Watta
Dammulla, Karandana
Sri Lanka
(B.E. 2559) March 2016*

Questions & Answers on Dhamma

(First Impression – 2016 June)

‘The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts’

A DHAMMA POOJĀ

At the feet of my Kalyāna Mitta Dhamma guru

**Most Venerable KAṬUKURUNDE ÑĀṄANANDA
MAHĀ THERO**

*With deep devotion for the insight into the Dhamma
and guidance to walk the path.*

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

– A Shishyā



Discussions with Bhikkhu Yogānanda

Introductory Note by the Author:

This is a series of articles on Ven Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thera. In November 2009, I had the opportunity to stay at his monastery for a few days and have several long conversations with him. The articles are based on the recordings of these discussions.

- Bhikkhu Yogānanda

Part 1

Bhante Ñāṇananda is not the monk I thought he would be. He is much more. As I recall my first meeting with him in his small cave kuti, the first word that crosses my mind is “innocent”. For a senior monk who has been in the order for more than 40 years, he is disarmingly simple, unpretentious and friendly. Childlike even. But you would not get that impression from his classics *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought* and *The Magic of the Mind*.

I was introduced to his writings by my friend Ven. Sumana, an English monk. It was Bhante Ñāṇananda’s *Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled* collection that I first read. Later I would go through *The Magic of the Mind*, which I would find both enchanting and baffling at the same time. It would take me even longer to take up *Concept and Reality*. All of them would leave a lasting impression on me, and define the way I interpret the Dhamma, but not before completely misconceiving what he was saying, engage in a lengthy correspondence with him, and finally meet him only to learn that I was miserably wrong on many things all that time. And it would be a meeting I’ll always remember.

I was a staunch ‘Ñāṇavirist’ until that meeting, so for me *Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled* was more or less a commentary on *Notes on Dhamma* by Ven. Ñāṇavira Thera. Sure enough there were some passages here and there that took some effort to beat into submission, but language is a flexible medium and the mind is infinitely creative. On the few occasions when that problem could not be easily shrugged off, I resorted to considering Bhante Ñāṇananda the scholar who needed to bow in front of the experience of Ven. Ñāṇavira.

The first *vassa* in 2009 was a time when my understanding of the Dhamma went through some changes. I

noted those thoughts down, and sent some of it to Bhante Ñāṇananda for review. A particularly long letter that ran into more than 50 pages took two months for a reply. Bhante thought it would take an equally long letter to explain the matters, which he was not in a position to write: he had just returned from a two-month stay in the hospital. Instead, he invited me to visit him in his monastery and stay a few days, which created a few problems, because Ven. Katukurunde Ñāṇananda Thera is an outcast.

His critical analysis of Buddhist texts and the unwillingness to adhere to the commentarial tradition has made Bhante Ñāṇananda a radical and a heretic. He probably knew what he was getting into from the very beginning. In the introduction to *Concept and Reality*, written in 1969, he states:

“It is feared that the novelty of some of our interpretations will draw two types of extreme reaction. On the one hand, it might give rise to a total antipathy towards the critical analysis of doctrinal points as attempted here. On the other, it might engender an unreasonable distrust leading to a sweeping condemnation of the commentaries as a whole. This work has failed in its purpose if its critical scrutiny of the occasional shortcomings in the commentarial literature makes anyone forget his indebtedness to the commentaries for his knowledge of the Dhamma.”^[1]

Over the years he would become less apologetic and more straightforward in his assertions, but his criticisms would always remain subtle, his delightful sarcasm barely noticed unless approached with the necessary background knowledge and the attention they deserve. For example, criticising the *Ābhidhammika* atomism and the commentarial *sabhāva* (own-essence) doctrine, he says:

“An insight meditator, too, goes through a similar experience when he contemplates on name-and-form, seeing the four elements as empty and void of essence, which will give him at least an iota of the conviction that this drama of existence is empty and insubstantial. He will realize that, as in the case of the dumb show, he is involved with things that do not really exist. [...] Seeing the reciprocal relationship between name-and-form, he is disinclined to dabble in concepts or gulp down a dose of prescriptions. [...] What is essential here, is the very understanding of essencelessness. If one sits down to draw up lists of concepts and prescribe them, it would only lead to a mental constipation.” [2]

It is in his latest booklet *Nibbana and the Fire Simile* that I found him being the most direct:

“There is a flush of Buddhist literature thriving in the West which attempts to interpret this fire simile in the light of the Vedic myth that the extinguished fire ‘goes into hiding’. Though the Buddha succeeded in convincing the Brahmin interlocutors of the dependently arisen nature of the fire by the reductio-ad-absurdum method, these scholars seem to be impervious to his arguments. What is worse, misinterpretations have even sought refuge in blatant mistranslations of sacred texts.

[...]

The term ‘extinction’ is anathema to the West in general. Perhaps as a euphemism, ‘extinguishment’ might be ‘passable’. But rather than playing with the ‘fire-simile’ it is better to accept the obvious conclusions, willy nilly.” [3]

To appreciate the rebelliousness of these passages and many others like it, one needs to understand the context in which they were written. The monastic Sangha in general is quite

dogmatic and traditionalist, not entirely welcoming of challenging views. When the Nibbāna sermons were delivered at the Nissarana Vanaya, Bhante Ñāṇananda had the backing of his teacher, the illustrious Elder Ven. Matara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahathera, who not only allowed him the freedom but invited and encouraged him to express his radical views. Even then he was criticized by many of his colleagues. Those views were a main reason that led to Bhante Ñāṇananda's departure from the Nissarana Vanaya after the death of Ven. Ñāṇārāma. He left on his own accord, and set up a small monastery in Devalegama: Pothgulgala Aranya. It was there that I first met him in November last year.

It is late in the evening that I arrive, and Bhante Ñāṇananda is out visiting a doctor, something that was becoming more frequent as his asthma was getting worse. After he returns at around 10 pm, I'm taken to his small cave kuti by his student Ven. Damita. I'm surprised to see how frail and almost fragile Bhante Ñāṇananda is. I introduce myself; he slaps his head and laughs, and asks: "How did you manage to escape?"

The next day, after *piṇḍapāta* I went to visit him in his kuti. He warmly welcomes me. I pull out his last reply to my letters in which he provided some points to ponder on, and start asking him for clarifications on each of the points. As I sit there on the floor listening to his thoroughly informative commentary, some of my cherished views get blasted to bits.

Answering a question dealing with the structure of experience, Bhante Ñāṇananda quotes the Hemakamānavapucchā of the Sutta Nipāta (from memory, of course), and uses the simile of the plaintain trunk to illustrate the way knowledge of experience is gained.

“It’s a beautiful sutta, where Hemaka explains the reason why he gained faith in the Buddha.

*‘Ye me pubbe viyākaṃsu
Huraṃ gotama sāsanā,
Iccāsi iti bhavissati
Sabbam taṃ itihitihaṃ
Sabbam taṃ takkavaḍḍhanaṃ
Nāhaṃ tattha abhiramiṃ.
Tvañ ca me dhammam akkhāhi tañhā nigghātaṇaṃ muni,
Yaṃ veditvā sato caraṃ tare loka visattikaṃ.’*

‘Those in the past who explained their teachings to me outside Gotama’s dispensation said “so it was and so it will be”. All that is “so and so” talk; all that promoted speculation. I did not delight in them. And you, O Sage, do expound to me the teaching of destruction of craving, knowing which faring mindfully I shall cross over the clinging in the world.’

“Those verses cut to the heart of the problem. They show the value of this *akālika* Dhamma. *Tañhā* is something that is here and now, and it is *tañhakkhaya* that is Nibbāna.

“Now, the simile of the plantain trunk comes in here. At the end, all of this is just a heap of *saṅkhāra*-s – preparations, which the Buddha has equated to a plantain trunk. It is not necessary to roll the sheaths to realize the pithlessness of it; one just needs to take the sword of *paññā* and cut through. From the cross section itself one realizes. Actually that is what is meant by understanding *paṭiccasamuppāda*, not memorizing the 12 links. The Dhamma is *akālika* because of this principle.”

In his letter Bhante has mentioned the importance of understanding the difference between *vijānāti* and *pajānāti* when it comes to discussing *viññāṇa*. I ask for an elaboration.

“This is something that tends to get overlooked. There are many words that share the *ñā* root in the texts: *sañjānāti*, *vi jānāti*, *pajānāti*, *abhijānāti*, *parijānāti*, *ājānāti*. There may be more. It is with a reason that there are these differences between them.

“It is commonly known that the root *ñā* stands for ‘knowledge’. Why is it said ‘*vi jānāti*’ when it could have easily been said ‘*jānāti*’? Most translations just use ‘knows’. But *vi jānāti* means ‘discriminatively knows’. What is the main job of *viññāṇa*? We can clarify from the Mahāvedalla Sutta. There we get the phrases *yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vi jānāti* and *yaṃ vi jānāti taṃ pajānāti*. ‘What one perceives, that one discriminates’ and ‘what one discriminates, that one knows’.

“From the examples that follow that phrase we can understand the *jānana* level of each. For *sañjānāti*: *Nīlakampi sañjānāti*, *pītakampi sañjānāti*, *lohitakampi sañjānāti*, *odātampi sañjānāti* – using colours. When someone is coming from a distance, all we see is just some blob of colour. When he comes closer we separate him from the others: ‘oh, he is this person, not the other’. When we know deeply, at *pajānāti* level, all is the same, just the four elements, but let’s leave that aside for the moment.”

“What are the examples given for *vi jānāti*? There are two; the first is *sukhan’ti pi vi jānāti*, *dukkhan’ti pi vi jānāti*, *adukkhamasukhan’ti pi vi jānāti*. This clearly shows that *vi jānana* is unique to living beings, not found in trees and rocks. The first level of *viññāṇa* is in discriminating between different feelings. For instance, in the Mahānidāna Sutta we find the Buddha asking Ven. Ananda Thera whether there would be any self notion where there is no feeling. The answer is ‘no’. That shows that feeling is fundamental. So what is there in feeling? Bifurcation, which is the most fundamental delusion.”

He pauses to say how glad he is that there is no need to use ‘footnotes’ when talking to me. I’m glad I did the homework. If you want to find Bhante Ñāṇananda in his zone, do the necessary preparatory studies, and be willing to put up with copious amounts of Pāli, not all of which would be translated.

But then he asks “Do you remember the other example for *vijānāti*?” I don’t.

“There is a second example for *vijānāti* from the Khaj-
janīya Sutta:

*ambilampi vijānāti, tittakampi vijānāti, kaṭukampi
vijānāti, madhurakampi vijānāti, khārikampi vijānāti,
akhārikampi vijānāti, loṇikampi vijānāti, aloṇikampi
vijānāti* — different tastes. Do you see any difference
between knowing colours and knowing tastes?”

I mumble my ignorance.

“With taste the discrimination is explicit. When we taste something, it takes a while to decide whether it’s sweet or sour or salty. Some foods we can’t easily categorize by taste, like the *Nelli* fruit. But it is not essential to go that far: what is important is to remember that discriminating between different feeling tones is the main function of *viññāṇa*.

“A unique feature of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is the way one result becomes the cause for another. One pulls the other in. When we take a pair of items in *paṭiccasamuppāda*, one member is also a member in the next pair. The very question whether *saññā* and *viññāṇa* are the same or different reeks of absolutism, an attempt to separate them into water-tight compartments. But their connectedness is pointed out in the Sutta with *yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vijānāti, yaṃ vijānāti taṃ pajānāti*. This doesn’t mean all three are the same either. The nuances are important.

“The difference between *viññāṇa* and *paññā* is explained as *paññā bhāvetabbā, viññāṇaṃ pariññeyyaṃ: paññā* is to be developed, *viññāṇa* is to be understood. When *paññā* is fulfilled, *viññāṇa* is fully comprehended. As in the magic show: to see through the magic is to miss the show.”

The last sentence is a reference to Bhante Ñāṇananda’s short masterpiece *The Magic of the Mind*.

“In the floodlights of *paññā* there is no room for the shadows of *viññāṇa*. The delusion of self-love reflects a world, so there are the two: an I and a world. Reflections on the eye, reflections on the ear, reflections on the mind: taking these reflections that fall on the senses as true, the materialists go looking for a world out there. When the Buddha called all of that a mere illusion, he meant all, including concepts. That’s why it is said *sabba dhammakkhayampatto vimutto upadhisaṅkhaye*.^[4] Mind and dhammas are the last resort of delusion.”

This is one of the most controversial of Bhante Ñāṇananda’s views. *The Magic of the Mind* discusses this topic at length. He has been called an idealist and an illusionist because of it; he rejects both accusations. Being a Ñāṇavirist at the time, this ‘illusionist’ interpretation was something I too found difficult to accept, especially in light of Ven. Ñāṇavira’s explicit and vehement rejection of the notion of *māyā* as a hindu concept shared by the Mahayanists.

“It is *viññāṇa* that discriminates between a sense and an object. The *Ābhidhammikas* are stuck thinking that even when all else falls apart *mano viññāṇa* remains. It is like we separating a flowing river into parts, naming them, and then putting the parts back together to create a river. I remember something Dr. W.S. Karunaratne said: ‘the grammar of nature does not correspond to the grammar of language’. That’s a nice saying. This is beautifully illustrated in the Potthapāda Sutta. We separate the

flux of existence into parts, with *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*. Those *saṅkhās* are mere suggestions. They can only nudge us toward a certain direction. We cannot *understand* reality using them.

“Words have a limited capacity. It is okay to use them as long as one realizes their limitations. One who realizes their limitations would not be limited by them. The Poṭṭhapāda Sutta ends with *imā kho Citta lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo, yāhi Tathāgato voharati, aparāmasaṃ*. We must be so grateful to the ancient bhāṅakas: it would have been such a loss if that last word were forgotten. *Aparāmasaṃ* – not grasping. That’s where the whole secret lies.”

And then he laughs his delightful laugh, as if all that should have been obvious in the first place.

NOTES

1. Ñāṇananda. K. (1997) [1971], *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*, Buddhist Publication Society, p. VI.
2. Ñāṇananda, Katukurunde, Bhikkhu (2004), *Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled*, Vol.II, Dharma Grantha Mudrana Bharaya, p. 183.
3. Ñāṇananda, Katukurunde, Bhikkhu (2010), *Nibbāna and the Fire Simile*, Dharma Grantha Mudrana Bharaya, p. 26.
4. Sn. 992

Part 2

There is hardly any teaching that has given rise to more internal disputes among Buddhists than *paṭiccasamuppāda*. My next question is based on a comment by Bhante Nāṇananda, which considers *paṭiccasamuppāda* as the golden mean between *atthitā* (existence) and *natthitā* (non-existence), replacing them with *samudaya* (arising) and *vaya* (passing away).

“Everyone knows that the middle way is the noble eight-fold path. Everyone knows that the first sermon was the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. But if for some reason Ālārakālāma or Uddaka Rāmaputta were alive, what we would have as the Dhammacakkappavattana would be something short like the Bāhiya Sutta, because they were facing a duality of a different nature.

“The five ascetics were given a teaching based on the ethical middle path, avoiding the two extremes of *kāmasukhalikānuyoga* and *attakilamathānuyoga*. But the middle path of right view is found in the Kaccānagotta Sutta, beautifully used by Ven. Nāgārjuna. When the Theravadins got engrossed with the Abhidhamma they forgot about it. The Mādhyamikas were alert enough to give it the attention it deserved.

“Extremism is found not only in ethics, but also in various kinds of views. The duality of *asti* and *nāsti* has a long history. I don't have much knowledge in the Vedas, but I remember in Ṛg Veda, in the Nāsādīya Sūkta,^[1] you get the beautiful phrase *nāsadāsīn no sadāsīt tadānīm*. They were speculating about the beginnings: did existence come from non-existence or vice-versa.

“All those kinds of dualities, be it *asti/nāsti* or *sabbaṃ ekattaṃ/sabbaṃ puṭhuttaṃ* etc. were rejected by the Buddha: *majjhena Tathāgato Dhammaṃ deseti* – he taught the Dhamma

by the middle. It's not just the middle path. It's not a mixture of 50% of each. We usually think that the middle is between two ends. It's a rejection of both ends and an introduction of a novel standpoint. Again, I remember Dr. W.S. Karunaratne saying how *paṭiccasamuppāda*, both as a philosophy and as a word, was novel to Indian thinking. There were other *vāda*-s such as *Adhiccāsammuppāda* and *Issaranimmāna*, but not *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and it is not a *vāda*.

“The ‘parroting’ method of *paṭiccasamuppāda* involves dishing out the 12 terms, and even then, the *paṭiloma* is often forgotten. But the important thing is the principle, embedded in ‘*asmiṃ sati...*’, as seen in many Suttas. There again, I also made a mistake inadvertently when translating: in early editions of *The Magic of the Mind* I used ‘this/that’ following the standard English translations. That’s completely wrong. It should be ‘this/this’.

“In the formula we must take two elements that make a pair and analyse the conditionality between them. ‘That’ implies something outside the pair, which is misleading. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is to be seen among the elements in a pair. The trick is in the middle; there’s no point in holding on to the ends. And even that middle needs to be let go of, not grasped.

“When introducing *paṭiccasamuppāda* we first get the principle: *imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati...* and then *yadidaṃ* – the word *yadidaṃ* clearly shows that what follows is an illustration. And then the well-known 12 elements are given. But how is it in the *paṭiloma*? *Avijjaya tu eva* – there’s an emphasis, as if to say: yes, the arising of suffering is a fact, it is the nature of the world, but it doesn’t end there; from the fading away of that same ignorance this suffering could be made to cease. That is why we can’t categorically say that any of these things exist or not. It entirely depends on *upādāna*. It is *upādāna* that decides between existence and

non-existence. When there is no *upādāna* you get *anupādā parinibbāna*, right then and there. And that is why the Dhamma is *akālika*.”

The impossibility of making categorical statements about existence was discussed extensively in Bhante Nāṇananda’s *The Magic of the Mind*, and he reminds me again about the importance of the Kālakārāma Sutta which provided the basis for that book. He quickly adds that the Buddha’s stand is not something like that of his contemporary sceptic agnostic Sañjaya Bellatṭhiputta, the so-called eel-wiggler; rather, the situation is beyond what could be expressed through the linguistic medium. It can only be known individually: *paccattaṃ veditabbo*.

His interpretation of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, which dramatically deviates from the traditional exegesis, has earned Bhante Nāṇananda a few vehement critics. He amusedly mentions a recent letter sent by a monk where he was accused of ‘being a disgrace to the Theriya tradition’. This criticism, no doubt coming from a Theravāda dogmatist, is understandable seeing how accommodating Bhante Nāṇananda is when it comes to teachings traditionally considered Mahāyāna, hence taboo for any self-respecting Theravādin. However, if one delves deeper, one would see that he is only trying to stay as close as possible to early Buddhist teachings.

“I didn’t quote from the Mahāyāna texts in the Nibbāna sermons,” he says, “because there was no need. All that was needed was already found in the Suttas. Teachers like Nāgārjuna brought to light what was already there but was hidden from view. Unfortunately his later followers turned it in to a *vāda*.”

He goes on to quote two of his favourite verses from Ven. Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamādhymakakārikā (as usual, from memory):

*Śūnyatā sarva-dṛṣṭīnaṃ proktā niḥsaraṇaṃ jinaiḥ,
yeṣāṃ śūnyatā-dṛṣṭis tān asādhyān babhāṣire* [MK 13.8]

The Victorious Ones have declared that emptiness is the relinquishing of all views. Those who are possessed of the view of emptiness are said to be incorrigible.

*Sarva-dṛṣṭi-prahāṇāya yaḥ saddharmam adeśayat,
anukampam upādāya taṃ namasyāmi gautamaṃ*
– [MK 26.30]

I reverently bow to Gautama who, out of compassion, has taught the doctrine in order to relinquish all views.

Bhante doesn't bother translating the verses; the ones provided above are by David Kalupahana.

“When I first read the Kārikā I too was doubting Ven. Nāgārjuna's sanity” he laughs. “But the work needs to be understood in the context. He was taking a jab at the Sarvāstivādins. To be honest, even the others deserve the rebuke, although they now try to get away by using Sarvāstivāda as an excuse. How skilled Ven. Nāgārjuna must have been, to compose those verses so elegantly and filling them with so much meaning, like the Dhammapada verses. It's quite amazing. This has been rightly understood by Prof. Kalupahana.”

Prof. David J. Kalupahana is an eminent Sri Lankan scholar who stirred up another controversy when he portrayed Ven. Nāgārjuna as a reformist trying to resurrect early Buddhist teachings. He had been a lecturer during Bhante Nāṇananda's university days as a layman at Peradeniya.

“If there is no substance in anything, what is left is emptiness. But many people are afraid of words, like *śūnyatā*. They want to protect their four.” With that ‘irreverent’ comment about the four *paramattha dhamma*-s of the Abhidhamma, Bhante Nāṇananda breaks into amused laughter.

“If one does not approach the commentarial literature with a critical eye, one would be trapped. Unfortunately many are. In fact, I had to remove a few pages from the manuscript of *Concept and Reality* on Ven. Nyanaponika’s request”.

I’m disappointed to hear that, as *Concept and Reality* had already become my favourite commentary on the Buddhist teachings. There are some delightfully understated criticisms of the traditional views in the book, and I wonder what we have lost in the editorial process at the hands of Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, an undoubtedly very learned yet quite conservative scholar. When I express my dismay, Bhante Ñāṇananda adds that now he tends to agree with Ven. Nyanaponika.

“I did it unwillingly, but later on I also thought it may have been too much as it was my first book. Perhaps what is left is quite enough. The message still gets through. Some of that I could restate in the Nibbāna sermons as I had the backing of my teacher.”

This teacher is Ven. Matara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahathera, then abbot of the Nissarana Vanaya and an illustrious elder of the Sri Lankan forest tradition. I ask Bhante what the response of the Sangha was when those controversial sermons were delivered.

“Apart from a very few, the others didn’t really understand. Some went around criticising, calling me a heretic. Fortunately it didn’t get out of hand thanks to the teacher. But then some others like Ven. Khemānanda were very appreciative.”

Our discussion moves on to Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera. I wonder what influence this radical monk had on Bhante Ñāṇananda, but I can’t muster enough courage to ask directly. So I just let him speak on his views.

“It is true, Ven. Ñāṇavīra made a start. But I think he went to an extreme in his criticisms, until his followers were dropping even the useful things. And he failed to make the necessary distinctions between *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* Nibbāna elements. That led to an idealized view of the noble disciple. And now there is a lineage of ‘Ñāṇavīrists’ who fail to see anything beyond Ven. Ñāṇavīra’s views. They are simply idolizing him.”

I was one of them until I started a correspondence with Bhante Ñāṇananda, so I know the way of thinking.

To end the discussion I pick up the thorniest of issues. I ask: “What is a ‘thing’? Is it completely imaginary, or is it something made by the mind using the ingredients ‘out there’?” A straightforward answer to that rather extremist question would make Bhante Ñāṇananda’s position clear on the gamut of views.

“I’m sure you have read Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. You must have come across the Phenapindūpama Sutta. In the notes you’ll see Ven. Bodhi explaining that although the lump is illusory, the ingredients aren’t. It is worse when it comes to the magic show. He says that only the magic is not real; the magician’s appurtenances are. This is a distortion of the simile given by the Buddha. We must appreciate the great work done by Ven. Bodhi, but it is unfortunate that he is bound by the commentarial tradition.

“What is considered the ‘truth’ is relative to each individual. Each person gives evidence in the court of reality based on his own level of experience. For example, parents often give false explanations to their little children. But these are true to the kids. When asked, the kid will tell what his parents told him. It’s true for the child, but not for us. In the famous commentarial story about Ven. Tissa Thera we find him seeing a woman as a skeleton, and saying so when asked by her husband. The venerable was closer to the truth.

“When we transcend one level of truth, the new level becomes what is true for us. The previous one is now false. What one experiences may not be what is experienced by the world in general, but that may well be truer. But how do we reach the ultimate truth? This is beautifully explained in the Dhātuvibhanga Sutta: *Taṃ saccam, yaṃ amosadhammaṃ nibbānaṃ*. And from the Dvayatānupassanā Sutta: *amosadhammaṃ nibbānaṃ tad ariyā saccato vidū*. It is Nibbāna that is of non-falsifying nature, where there is no ‘thing’. Nibbāna is the highest truth because there is no other truth to transcend it.

“The Buddha called himself the first chick in this era to break out of the egg of ignorance. All these wonderful things we do such as space travel all happen inside this *saḷāyatana* shell. If *paṭiccasamuppāda* were presented properly, perhaps a few more chicks would be able to break through today.

“Ven. Nāgārjuna was right: at the end, all is empty. We are not willing to accept that existence is a perversion. Existence is suffering precisely because it is a perversion.”

It may not be a categorical answer, and it probably isn’t possible to give one. But I will bring this issue up again later.

We have been talking for more than an hour, and it is time for Bhante’s meal. I end the discussion, looking forward to another one in the evening.

NOTES

1. Rgveda: sūkta 10.129 (English translation)

Part 3

In the traditional exegesis, *pancupādānakkhandhā* (five aggregates of clinging) and *nāma-rūpa* (name-and-form) are used interchangeably, implying that these two are the same. As Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera also pointed out in his *Notes on Dhamma*, this is a dubious interpretation that does not find explicit support in the Suttas. I ask Bhante Ñāṇananda how we should understand the connection between *pancupādānakkhandha* and *nāma-rūpa*.

“It is quite common to hear that these two are the same: that *rūpa-upādānakkhandha* is the same as the *rūpa* in *nama-rūpa*, and the other four aggregates are *nāma*. That is like trying to measure distance in kilograms – a confusion.

“In that beautiful seminar in a moonlit night recorded in the Mahāpunnama Sutta, it is made quite clear that *viññāna* cannot be a part of *nāma*. One venerable asks “*Ko hetu ko paccayo rūpakkhandhassa paññāpanāya?*” and so on — what is the cause for the designation of each aggregate? And the Buddha answers that it is the four great elements that give rise to the designation of an aggregate of form. For *vedanā*, *saññā* and *saṅkhāra*, it is *phassa* – contact. But for *viññāna*, the cause is *nāma-rūpa*.

“We are used to explaining *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the form of the standard 12 links starting from *avijjā*. However, always trying to put *avijjā* in the lead in exegesis led to misinterpretations of certain Suttas. For example, commenting on the Mahānidāna Sutta, Ven. Buddhaghosa Thera brings in the so-called three-life interpretation whereas there is nothing missing from the Sutta itself. As I tried to explain in *The Magic of the Mind*, it is from the preparations that are done in the darkness of ignorance that the duality of *viññāna* and *nāma-rūpa* arise.

“And what is that duality? The same duality seen by the dog on a plank over water.” Bhante Nāṇananda is referring to a simile he has often used in Dhamma discussions:

“A dog is crossing a plank over a stream. Half way through it looks into the water and sees another dog there. It wags its tail and the other responds. It snarls and the other reacts. It looks away to ignore, but when it looks again the water dog is still there looking on.

The view of an existing self is also due to such an unwise attention. “I think therefore I am” is the resulting wrong conclusion. Neither narcissistic love nor masochistic hate can solve the problem. Ignoring with a cynical sneer is to evade the problem. Therefore one has to thrash-down this problem of the elusive self image to the basic confrontation between consciousness and name and form.”

– “Reflect Rightly on the Reflection”
From Topsy-turvydom to Wisdom

“*Nāma-rūpa* is a deception. It is unreal. But in the illusion of *viññāna*, wherever you look, it is there. Whatever it may be, whether it’s a sight or a sound or a thought, it is just *vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetanā*, *phassa*, *manasikāra*. But here again there is a common misinterpretation: when listing the *nāma-dhamma*-s, some start from *phassa*, *vedanā*,... They put *phassa* to the front. But *phassa* has to be at the back.”

He says the above in Sinhala, where the word for ‘back’ is ‘*passa*’. The pun is lost in translation. As for putting *phassa* first, it is often seen in the Abhidhamma literature when listing the *cetasika*-s.

“They say so because in *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *phassa* comes before *vedanā*. That doesn’t apply here. In the Suttas, such as the Sammāditthi Sutta, the ordering is never in that form. The Buddha and the Arahants were not mistaken; *logically* one can have *phassa* first, but *psychologically* it is *vedanā* that is primary. It is through *vedanā* that one recognizes the four great elements, not through *phassa*. The self notion hinges on *vedanā*. That is why it deserves to be the first.

“So one develops a *saññā* according to *vedanā*, based on which one has *cetanā*, at which point the ‘personality’ is taken for granted. This creates the duality necessary for *phassa*. *Manasikāra* is at the end, somewhat like *ekaggatā*, unifying them all: *manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā* – all things arise from attention.

“With *vedanā*, the self notion ‘awakens’, although here it is more like dreaming. Or like a blind man groping in the dark. The blind man reacts only to the feeling of bumping on to something. That is why Ven. Ananda Thera replied to the Buddha that it is not possible to have any self notion when there is no *vedanā*. *Taṇhā* arises from *vedanā*.

“So where does *pañcupādānakkhandha* come in? *Pañcupādānakkhandhā* is the final result of the constant tussle between *viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa*. This is made clear in the Mahāsalāyatanika Sutta. What is gathered from the six *viññāṇa*–s, at the end, are filtered down to things grasped as “these are my forms, these are my feelings, these are my perceptions, ...”

“You might remember how the Buddha explained the designation of a *khandha*, in the Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta: *atītānāgata-paccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumam vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā* (past, future, present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near). That’s the demarcation of the heap.”

One of the main themes of Bhante Nāṇananda's classic *The Magic of the Mind* is the illusory nature of *viññāṇa*. Earlier we discussed some of the nuances involved in differentiating between *viññāṇa* and *paññā*, and now the discussion moves on to the relationship between *viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa*.

“It's a pity that many Buddhists still cannot accept that the goal of this practice is the cessation of *viññāṇa*. It is a suffering; the simile for *viññāṇāhāra* is being beaten by a spear 300 times a day. The darkness of *avijjā* creates the background for it. As I pointed out with the similes of the cinema and the magic show, these things can only happen as long as there is darkness. All this is just an illusion, a drama. In fact, the oldest meaning of *saṅkhāra* is found in that context of a stage show.

“The connection between *viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa* can be illustrated with a childish simile: it is like a dog chasing its own tail. The modern Rohitassas who try to overcome a world as seen through *viññāṇa* are no different. They chase after what the Buddha dismissed as an illusion. There is nothing to go chasing after here; all that needs to be done is to stay where one is, and to realize that it is merely a shadow. When the darkness of *avijjā* is dispelled, *saṅkhāra*-s are stilled. The game is over.

“*Viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa* revolve around each other at an indescribable speed. That's why it was told to Ven. Sāti that it is wrong to say “*viññāṇaṃ sandhāvati saṃsarati anaññaṃ*” (it is this same *viññāṇa* that runs and wanders, not another). If only the Ābhidhammikas realized that *parivatta* in *lahuparivattaṃ cittaṃ* means ‘revolving’: *viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpa paccayā viññāṇaṃ*.

“The Gāthās in the Sagāthaka Vagga, although often not given enough attention, are very deep. I stopped the Nibbāna

series at sermon number 33, but what I had planned for 34, although never delivered, was based on that beautiful verse from the Nimokkha Sutta:

*Nandībhavaparikkhayā saññāviññāṇasaṅkhatayā,
Vedanānaṃ nirodhā upasamā evaṃ khvāhaṃ āvuso
jānāmi
Sattānaṃ nimokkhaṃ pamokkhaṃ vivekaṃ'ti. [SN. 1.2]*

When delight and existence are exhausted
When perception and consciousness are both destroyed
When feelings cease and are appeased – thus, O friend,
Do I know, for them that live
Deliverance, freedom, detachment.

– Translation by Bhante Ñāṇananda:
Saṃyutta Nikāya – An Anthology

“In all other religions, *viññāṇa* was taken as a unit, and worse, as the soul. It is taught that even if everything else is impermanent, this isn't. And it is taught as that which reaches *Brahmā*. But the Buddha pointed out that it is a mere illusion. It can't exist on its own.

“That brings us to a nice point. What is the simile used by Ven. Sariputta Thera to illustrate the *aññamaññapaccayatā* (interdependence) of *viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa*?”

“The simile of the two bundles of bamboo reeds” I reply.

“Why is that? Couldn't he have chosen something better, some wood with pith – say, two bundles of Sāla wood? See how penetrative they are even in their use of similes. The Pāli for bamboo reed is *tacasāra*. *Taca* means skin or peel, so *tacasāra* means that which has just the skin for its pith. The thing taken by

the world as being full of pith is summarily dismissed by Ven. Sariputta Thera. It's not a unit either, but a bundle.

“I'm reminded of something Ven. Ñāṇavīra said: ‘all consciousness is self consciousness.’ That is quite right. Occasionally he came up with brilliant insights like that which shook the establishment. He was one who wasn't afraid to point out these misinterpretations. It is unfortunate that he was rather extremist in other areas.

“The whole notion of the so-called *antarābhava* depends on the belief that *viññāṇa* ‘goes’ on its own. The Buddha's explanation of the wandering of *viññāṇa* is not like that of the Upanishads where the simile of the leech is used.^[1] According to the Dhamma *viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa* are in a state of whirling or turning around.

“The wandering of the mind is not like that of physical things. It's a circuitous journey of a mind and its object. With the taking up of one object by a mind, a sort of whirling begins; when one end is lost from grasp, the other end is taken up: *itthabāvaññathābhāvaṃ saṃsāraṃ n'ātivattati* – this-ness and otherwise-ness, that's all there is in *saṃsāra*. Our minds keep wandering away but keep coming back to this *upādinna*. Who likes to let go of it, to die? It always comes back to that which is held dearly. At the last moment, when Māra comes to snatch it away, one does not want to give it up, so there is a contest: the struggle for life. The Buddha asked us to just give it up.

“Think of any kind of existence, and you will see that it depends on grasping. There is no ‘thing’ that exists on its own. Here again, I'm reminded of something Dr. W.S. Karunaratne said: ‘Existence has got to be relative; there is no absolute existence.’ But the world thinks of unitary things existing on their own. They ask, ‘why, even when I don't look at this thing, doesn't it continue existing?’ But really there is only a *diṭṭha*, a

seen. There is only a *suta*, a heard. But the moment we think of a seen ‘thing’, a heard ‘thing’, we are trapped. We create things with *maññanā*, ideation.”

“The problem with ‘things’ is solved in the Bāhiya Sutta: there are only *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta*, *viññāta*, nothing else. That is the theme in the Kālakārāma Sutta too. As long as one does *maññanā* about these, one would be deluded.”

Here we seem to have encountered a more thorough answer to my earlier question about the ‘reality of things’, and it is quite clear that Bhante Ñāṇananda has quite a different view from the standard Theravadin interpretation which is closer to naïve realism. It is also opposed to Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera’s explanations, and readers who are familiar with *Clearing the Path* would notice that Bhante Ñāṇananda’s interpretation is close to Sister Vajira’s earlier views. It is easy to see why Bhante is sometimes accused of being a *viññāṇavādin* by those who are less willing to consider the subtleties involved.

“But how is *viññāṇa* made to cease?” Bhante adds, discussing the final goal of Buddhist practice. “*Viññāṇa* has the nature to reflect, and what it reflects is *nāma-rūpa*. One is attached to the reflection because one doesn’t know that it is a reflection. But when the knowledge arises, attachment drops. In many instances where *paññā* is discussed, we find the words *paṭivedha* and *ativijjha*, meaning ‘penetration’. The view is replaced by a vision.”

Bhante then quotes from his own *Concept and Reality*:

“For the Arahant ... all concepts have become transparent to such a degree in that all-encompassing vision, that their boundaries together with their umbra and penumbra have yielded to the radiance of wisdom. This, then, is the significance of the word *anantaṃ* (endless,

infinite). Thus the paradoxically detached gaze of the contemplative sage as he looks through the concepts is one which has no object (*ārammaṇa*) as the point of focus for the worldling to identify it with. It is a gaze that is neither conscious nor non-conscious (*na saññī assa, saññī ca pana assa*), neither attentive nor non-attentive (*na manasikareyya, manasi ca pana kareyya*), neither fixed nor not fixed (*na jhāyati, jhāyati ca pana*) – a gaze that knows no horizon.”

NOTES

1. E.g.: “And just as a leech moving on a blade of grass reaches its end, takes hold of another and draws itself together towards it, so does the self, after throwing off this body, that is to say, after making it unconscious, take hold of another support and draw itself together towards it.” [Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.3] – From *The Upanishads* – *A New Translation* by Swami Nikhilananda

Part 4

The following is a minimally edited transcript of Bhante Ñāṇananda's comments on the Neyyattha Sutta, which seems to have been the seed out of which the Two Truths doctrine has been developed.

“We come across this in the Anguttara Nikāya: *nītattha sutta* and *neyyattha sutta*. *Nīta*, taken as it is, means you are led to it. *Neyya* means you have to be led. So *nīta* means you are already at the meaning; you don't have to reinterpret it. Whatever is supposed to be the *nīta* in the Buddha word, you have to take it 'as such'. Now, it is different when it comes to *neyyattha*: in that case you have to understand it in the context of the Dhamma; you can't take it as it appears.

“It is from this distinction that *sammuti/paramattha* and *samvṛti/paramārtha* (in Buddhist Sanskrit) have been developed. And also this is the reason I think the Nettippakaraṇa and Petakopadesa were composed, as guides to the commentator. Because it is the job of the commentator to explain a sutta, and *how* it should be explained is a problem. There are occasions when the Buddha used *loka samaññā loka nirutti* (worldly conventions, worldly parlance) as they are, according to the context. And on some occasions, especially to monks, he would say something very deep, which you have to take as it is.

“The traditional interpretation, as you get in the commentaries, is very simple: it says *neyyattha* would be such suttas where the ordinary concepts of beings etc. come in, but *nītattha* is where you get *anicca, dukkha, anattā*. That's a very simple definition of it.

“Among the discourses, there are some, like the Bāhiya Sutta, where you don't have to reintroduce anything into it. But the people will have to introduce something to understand them –

that's the whole trouble. A case which came to my attention was that sutta in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the case of Moliyaphagga, where, step by step, the Buddha had to correct even the question of Moliyaphagga.^[1] *Ko nu kho bhante phusati?* — it goes like that: ‘who, lord, does touch?’ [The Buddha replies:] ‘I don’t say like that. If I did, then you can ask me like that. The correct question should be: *Kim paccayā?*’

“So the *paccaya* terminology is actually the *nītattha*, if I may say so. But you can’t talk with *paccaya* always. In fact, I remember some people who tried to avoid the ‘I’ concept altogether in conversations, using such phrases as ‘this *pañcakkhandha*’. But that’s only artificial.

“This I may say is a challenge to understand the discourses. Because you always have to ask yourself: what are the *nītattha* suttas and what are the *neyyattha* suttas? Without a criterion to decide, you are in a fix. But if you start on your own, I think you could take instances where the Buddha is talking about the four noble truths, as well as *patīccasamuppāda*.

“This is an instance where we see the difference between the grammar of nature and the grammar of language. You have to give way to the grammar of language if you’re to talk. Because if you are to explain, you have to make compromises with language, as we say ‘it rains’ or ‘*devo vassatu*’. Otherwise there is something lacking. The subject, the object and then the adjectives and adverbs and the sentence structure – these are deciding our thinking. The logicians are bound by it. That is why the Dhamma is *atakkāvacara*. That again is a challenge: what is meant by *atakkāvacara*?

“Logic has to distinguish one from the other. It is again a logical question when they ask: *saññā* and *vedanā* – are they completely different, or are they the same thing? That is the way logic would put it. There’s no half way between. Even that they

tried to cover: I'm not very familiar with logic but what is already apparent in the canon is the tetralemma. The question of contradiction comes in: either it has to be this or the other. But there are these grey areas.

“All these problems come up because, first of all, we break reality – the flux of life – into pieces. We differentiate between a ‘thing’ and its colour: the colour is an adjective; the object is something else. So we create problems for ourselves. But then the Buddha had to convey a message – and in fact I make it a point to say, why the Buddha hesitated to teach was not out of jealousy or any other reason, but the problem was how to present this doctrine in an intelligible way to people. I may say that only the Buddha had that ability. Though it is again an unsolved problem, about the *Pacceka Buddha*–s, it seems, if ever they remain silent, hence called ‘silent’ Buddhas, it is because they could not, unlike the Buddha, bring these two truths into alignment.

“Already in the Kalakārāma Sutta you see how deep the problem is. But the Buddha could explain it sufficiently for one to start practicing. And once you start practicing, then, as in the Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta, you are walking the Dhamma-way, and you’ll realize by yourself. You go and see. Now, even though the Dhamma says *ehipassika*, we don’t want to go; we want to stay where we are and go through logic to understand the Dhamma. That is the problem with the scholars.

“The Buddha’s Dhamma was an invitation. If you start the practice, the rest you will know by yourself. The map can’t be the same as the journey. No map is complete by itself; it may use colours and signs etc. but it is never complete. So is the Dhamma. Much of it, the Buddha left unexplained. That is probably why the people are now complaining that there is no methodology here and that something is lacking in the Dhamma. But you can’t be spoon-fed.

“It is because the Buddha has given sufficient advice that some could realize even by just listening. They didn’t merely listen: they listened with rapt attention. Like in Ven. Bāhiya’s case, they were not leading idle lives. Their plaything was *jhāna*. So it was easy for the Buddha to make them understand, as they had a sharp receptive apparatus. They only needed *saddhā*. Without *saddhā*, with logic if you’re hoping to understand, you’re gravely mistaken.

“So now, getting down to the type of suttas we have, at a glance, perhaps, Bāhiya sutta is a clear cut case, although those who want something objective, with a substantialist view, would find something lacking there. And also, for instance, when the Buddha answered the accusations of the Brahmins, and when we come to the ten indeterminate points, that perhaps is something like *nītattha*. The Buddha is put to that point where He can’t agree any longer to the convention. Because He used conventional words, people made it an excuse to glean advantage from it. That is the case with Nibbāna: the fire going out.

“If the fire ‘goes out’ some think you should be able to go and locate where it is. Some scholars in the West also follow the same Hindu way where they think when the fire goes out it stays in some ineffable state. When it comes to such points of absurdity the Buddha had to correct them. Otherwise the Buddha would, for all practical purposes, use the convention. Even to Bāhiya he said ‘This is our *pinḍapāta* time’, as if there’s some strict time for *pinḍapāta*. As if His whole life is for *pinḍapāta*. ‘We have to go on *pinḍapāta*, don’t come and question us’! But when it comes to the Dhamma: ‘in the seen, just the seen, in the heard, just the heard.’ When Bāhiya could master and muster sufficient Samādhi he had built up in the past, when he was sufficiently calmed down, then the Buddha gave the real thing.

“There are also other occasions, for instance in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, where you find the verses:

*‘Ahaṃ vadāmīti pi so vadeyya
Mamaṃ vadantīti pi so vadeyya,
Loke samaññaṃ kusalo viditvā
Vohāramattena so vohareyyā’ ti.’ [SN 1.25]*

‘That monk still might use such words as “I,”
Still perchance might say: “They call this mine.”
Well aware of common worldly speech,
He would speak conforming to such use.’

“So every time the Buddha says ‘I’m going’ and so on, you should not think that He’s contradicted His own *anattā* doctrine.

“*Nītattha* could also be in such cases like in the Alagaddūpama Sutta where the brahmins are reprimanded for false accusations. The Buddha comes out with the statement: *Pubbe c’āhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ* – that is the best criterion to decide on which side you are. ‘All formerly and now, I merely say that there is suffering’ – there is no *one* suffering, whether it’s a *puggala* or person or individual – all this rot comes in because of not knowing that the Buddha’s message is also part and parcel of language.

“For all practical purposes, the Buddha’s words are enough. But for those who do not practice, but who are armchair critics, there is so much contradiction in the Buddha’s words. Sometimes He says there is *dukkha* only, and sometimes He says you are suffering. This is also the reason why there is such a mess in the interpretations of the *kamma* doctrine also. In *sammādiṭṭhi*, we may say there’s the ‘lower’ *sammādiṭṭhi* and the ‘higher’ *sammādiṭṭhi*.^[2] The *dasa-vatthuka sammādiṭṭhi* is *kam-massakatā*. When a person takes *kamma* as his own, he’s bound by it. You are bound by your own grasping. Then it’s a fact that you’re going to these various realms etc.: dependent

on *avijjā* there is *saṅkhāra*. Such people have to be judged by their own standards.

“By the way, I may also say, now that we are on the point: if you’re translating the Dhammapada, it is wrong according to my understanding to translate the *attavagga* as the chapter on *Self*. It should be *oneself*. Otherwise, as Radhakrishnan finds it, you are on the side of *attā*. But it is ‘oneself’: reflexive. If you understand that as self there’s a contradiction between *attāhi attano natthi* and *attāhi attano natho*. But these are just *loke samaññā*.

“Similarly in the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta, now and then the Buddha had to come out, especially in the last words of the sutta – they are very powerful: *imā kho citta loka samaññā... yāhi tathāgato voharati, aparāmasaṃ* (“Citta, these are the world’s designations, the world’s expressions, the world’s ways of speaking, the world’s descriptions, with which the Tathagata expresses himself but without grasping to them.”) I remember reading *The Meaning of Meaning* by Ogden and Richards; there they quoted from the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta. They understood that there’s something very deep in that simile about milk, curd, butter etc. Though they didn’t get everything, they knew the Buddha was nearer the truth about semantics.

“But now we think that where there’s a word there should be something. It’s the *thing* that’s causing all the trouble. There’s just a flux of life, a functioning, but no agent in it. But the language requires both. That is why we have to say ‘it rains’, leaving the room for someone to ask ‘what is this ‘it’?’. The fire goes out: where has it ‘gone’? The Buddha from time to time had to show the absurdity of such questions. In such contexts you come across the *nītattha*.”

NOTES

1. SN 12.12 (excerpt below)
2. “And what is right view? Right view, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right view with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions; and there is noble right view, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.”
[MN117]

Addendum for NOTE 1

[...]

“Who, now, Lord, exercises contact?”

“Not a fit question”, said the Exalted One. “I am not saying (someone) exercises contact. If I were saying so, the question would be a fit one. But I am not saying so. And I not saying so, if anyone were to ask this: ‘Conditioned, now, by what, Lord, is contact?’, this were a fit question. And the fit answer there, would be: ‘Conditioned by the sixfold sense-sphere, is contact, conditioned by contact is feeling’.”

[...]

– *Translation by Bhante Ñāṇananda:*
Samyutta Nikāya – An Anthology

Part 5

The final part of the Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta contains an interesting analysis by Ven. Sāriputta Thera which sheds light on the connection between *saḷāyatana* and *pañcupādānakkhandha*. I had carelessly commented on this section by reading the English translation without referring to the Pāḷi, and in his reply to my notes Bhante Ñāṇananda pointed out an important distinction I had failed to make.

Ven. Ñāṇamoli's translation of the relevant section reads as follows:

“If, friends, internally the eye is intact but no external forms come into its range, and there is no corresponding [conscious] engagement, then there is no manifestation of the corresponding section of consciousness. [MLDB (2009) p. 283]”

‘Corresponding [conscious] engagement’ is Ven. Ñāṇamoli's rendering of *tajjo samannāhāra*. I had taken this to be identical to *manasikāra* (attention), influenced by Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera's writings. In my interview, I ask Bhante Ñāṇananda for an explanation on the difference between the two.

“Earlier we pointed out how, in a discussion that may be categorized as *nītattha*, the Buddha corrected Ven. Moliyaphagga's questions which implied an agent behind action. He rephrased them with the *paccaya* terminology. Similarly, when we say *manasikāra*, some may tend to think of an agent behind the attention. But Ven. Sāriputta Thera takes a different approach here when explaining the arising of *viññāṇa*.

“He discusses three possibilities:

1. The eye is not ‘broken’ – it is functional. External forms don't come to the vicinity. And *Tajjo samannāhāra*, what-

ever that may be, is not present. Then, there's no eye consciousness.

“Here, we have to be specific about *viññāṇa*. Again, I'm reminded of something Dr. W.S. Karunaratne said: “There is no ‘*the viññāṇa*’; it is always ‘*a viññāṇa*’. Everything has to be concrete – there is no abstract consciousness.” But people think that consciousness exists on its own, and this has given rise to various theories. Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera also pointed this out when he said “*paṭiccasamuppāda* is *viññāṇa*”.^[1] I may not agree with everything he said, but here he did reveal an important matter. The reciprocal relationship between *viññāṇa* and *nāma-rūpa* is the vortex of existence, and it is the heart of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

2. The eye is not broken, and external forms do come to the vicinity. But *tajjo samannāhāra* is absent. Then, there is no eye-consciousness.
3. The eye is not broken, external forms come to the vicinity, and there is *tajjo samannāhāra*. Then, there is eye-consciousness.

“The word *tajjo* comes from *tat + ja*. *Tat* means ‘that [itself]’. It is the root of such important words as *tādī* and *tammaya*. So *taṭṭa* means ‘arisen out of that itself’. What is *samannāhāra*? You might remember that, in the Caṅkī Sutta, the Buddha happens to see the Kāpaṭhika Brahmin youth. There we find the word *upasaṃharati* along with *samannāhāra*,^[2] referring to a sort of focusing that may have not been planned – a chance meeting of eye to eye. *Samannāhāra* (*āharati* = brings) refers to a certain ‘bringing together’.

“So *tajjo samannāhāra* points to the fact that this ‘bringing together’ of the necessary factors for the arising of consciousness is inherent to the situation itself. It is unique to the situation, and does not come from within a person or from the outside. It is not exerted by oneself or an external agent: some

thought that there is an *ātman* inside who is in charge, while others said that it is a God that injects consciousness into the man. Letting go of all these extremes, Ven. Sāriputta Thera pointed out the crucial role of *tajjo samannāhāra* with his analysis of the three possibilities.”

And then Bhante falls silent, and looks on with a smile.

After a few moments, he asks: “What do you hear?”

There is a bird singing in the distance.

“Did it start singing only now?”

It probably had started earlier (and now that I am listening to the tapes as I transcribe this, I know that it had started many minutes earlier).

“It must have been singing all this while, but only now...”
I say.

“Only now...?”

“Only now did the attention go there.”

“*There* you have *tajjo samannāhāra*! So is it only because of the sound of the bird that you heard it? Didn’t you hear it only after I stopped talking? There could be other reasons too: had there been louder noises, you may not have heard it. So we see that it is circumstantial. That is why we mentioned in our writings: *everything is circumstantial; nothing is substantial.*”

Please allow me to interject here and add that the last sentence would remain something that I’ll always cherish from these interviews. Not only because of the simple profundity of the statement or the nice little practical experiment that led up to it, but also because of the gentle kindness in the way it was uttered.

“The attention that is present in a situation is to be understood as having arisen out of the circumstances. If there is anything of value in the Paṭṭhāna, that would be here, in its analysis of the 24 causes. I can’t say for certain, but it may well be an attempt at systematising the general concept mentioned in this sutta: how a thought is connected to another. Since it is impossible to explain this mechanism by breaking it apart with words, Ven. Sāriputta Thera says it is circumstantial – unique to the situation itself.

“It is because of this nature of the Buddhadhamma that the later Indian philosophers called it a *saṅghātavāda* – pluralism, or a theory of aggregates, where the causes are not limited to one or two or none. So my silence *paṭicca*, the sound of the bird *paṭicca*, absence of other sounds *paṭicca* etc. there was the arising of a different ear-consciousness.

“It is alright to refer to *tajjo samannāhāra* as *manasikāra* as long as we make it clear that the process is impersonal. We may also bring in the *Kim Mūlaka Sutta* ^[3] here. Unfortunately my explanation of it in *The Magic of the Mind*, in the chapter ‘Essence of Concepts’, was not accepted even by Ven. Nyanaponika. In the sutta we find the statement *manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā* (born of attention are all things). The commentary limits the discussion just to skillful states, which is a very narrow way of looking at it. Be it *sammā* or *micchā*, there the Buddha is pointing out the general principle.

“It is probably because of the importance of the principle discussed that the Buddha brought up the subject without being prompted by anyone. It is as if He declared it because the world would not hear or realize it otherwise. The sutta is a wonderful revelation about what we take as a ‘thing’. It is not something existing on its own in the world but a result of many psychological causes. But when we say that, we are accused of being *viññāṇavādins* and *suññatavādins*.

“One has to ask: why did the Buddha say ‘*manopubbāṅgamā dhammā, manosetṭhā manomayā*’ (Mind precedes all dhammas. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought – Dhp 1)? One has to admit that the Dhamma is *mano-mūlika*. But again, the mind is just one of the senses. What we have here is just a self-created problem. We discussed how existence is a perversion. The arising of dhammas is also the arising of *dukkha*. Not realizing this, some go looking for the truth among ‘things’.

“The search goes on because of delusion, and it is fruitless because they are chasing illusions. Dhammas, things, are all fabricated. They are all relative. They are all results of *maññanā* (ideation). Just as those who were entrenched in self-view saw the Buddha as a nihilist, those who are entrenched in materialism cannot grasp the Buddhist philosophy which puts the mind first.”

Here I ask a recurring question, probably because I still can’t bring myself to accept the already given answers due to my own materialistic tendencies (of those days): what would one see if one looks at the world ‘objectively’ – if such a thing were possible? Perhaps this is another way of asking what one sees in the *arahattaphala samādhi*.

“*Suññatā*” comes the quick reply.

“Whether people accept it or not, the truth is emptiness. We need not go far: it is already there in the three words *animitta*, *appaṇihita* and *suññata*. One has to go from *nimitta* (sign) to *animitta* (signless), with the help of signs. The culmination of *paṇidhi* (resolve) is *appaṇihita* (undirected). ‘Thingness’ gives way to emptiness.

“Imagine there were a large box here, with a label saying that the contents weigh 1000kg. If I were to ask you to move it, you’d object saying that it is too heavy for one person to handle. Let’s say I somehow coax you to try. When you try to lift, it

comes off almost without effort – there’s no bottom to the box! The 1000kg sign was deceiving you. That’s why the realization of the Dhamma is equated to laying down of a burden.

“To realize emptiness, one has to know what one is aiming at. *Yad’anuseti, tad’anumīyati, yad’anumīyati, tena saṅkhaṃ gacchati* (If one has an underlying tendency towards something, then one is measured in accordance with it. If one is measured in accordance with something, then one is reckoned in terms of it. [SN 22.36]). As long as there is *anusaya* there would be measuring, giving rise to the concept of ‘things’. Elimination of *anusaya* is like the bottom of the box giving way. After that, anyone can lift it.”

NOTES

1. ... any exemplification of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the sphere of experience can be re-stated in the form of the fundamental exemplification of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the sphere of experience, which is, as it must be, that beginning with *viññāṇa*. Thus, *viññāṇa* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* are one.
– Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera, *Notes on Dhamma*, “A Note on Paṭiccasamuppāda”, para. 20
2. *Atha kho kāpaṭhikassa māṇavassa etadahosi: ‘yadā me samaṇo gotamo cakkhunā cakkhuṃ upasaṃharissati, athāhaṃ samaṇaṃ gotamaṃ pañhaṃ pucchissāmi’ti. Atha kho bhagavā kāpaṭhikassa māṇavassa cetasā cetoparivitakkamaññāya yena kāpaṭhiko māṇavo tena cakkhūni upasaṃhāsi. Atha kho kāpaṭhikassa māṇavassa etadahosi: ‘samannāharati kho maṃ samaṇo gotamo, yannūnāhaṃ samaṇaṃ gotamaṃ pañhaṃ puccheyyanti. [MII p. 169 (PTS)]*

Then the thought occurred to Kāpaṭhika the youth, “When Gotama the contemplative meets my gaze with his, I will ask him a question.” And so the Blessed One, encompassing Kāpaṭhika’s awareness with his awareness, met his gaze. Kāpaṭhika thought, “Gotama the contemplative has turned to me. Suppose I ask him a question.” [MN 95]

3. [...] Rooted in desire (or interest) friends, are all things; born of attention are all things; arising from contact are all things; converging on feelings are all things; headed by concentration are all things; dominated by mindfulness are all things; surmountable by wisdom are all things; yielding deliverance as essence are all things; merging in the Deathless are all things; terminating in Nibbana are all things. [Excerpted from AN 8.83]
– Translation by Bhante Ñāṇananda (*The Magic of the Mind*)

Part 6

This is part 6 of a series on Ven. Katukurunde Ñāṇananda Thera. Many months have passed since I met Bhante Ñāṇananda for the first time, and had this series of discussions. More recordings remain to be published than have already appeared here. Unfortunately it seems unlikely that I will manage to transcribe them. I would now like to wrap up this series with one memorable discussion we had:

To end our long discussion, I ask from Bhante: “Does this mean that we should not be afraid to call Buddhism a *suññatavāda*?”

“We approach the Buddha’s teaching with our precast pigeonholes: either it has to be idealism, or it must be realism. If one really wants to call this an ‘ism’, they should be calling it ‘let-go-ism’. One picks up only to make use of and let go.

“The entire teaching of the Buddha could be summed up in a single *Pāli* word. What do you think it is?”

I wonder if Bhante is referring to *Appamāda*.

“*Yāvadeva*”, comes the unexpected answer. Bhante adds the Sinhala word: “hudek”. In English, it means ‘merely for the sake of’. I am awed by the simple profundity of that statement.

“That one word transcends all those isms. We might as well call this teaching a *yāvadeva-ism*. Each step on the way is merely for the sake of taking the next, and that too is merely for the next. In other words, one has to reverse *paṭiccasamuppāda*. We encounter the word *āhāra* (food, nutriment), for both good and the bad. *Hetu*, *paccaya*, *āhāra* all indicate causality. Later tradition tried to make a distinction between *hetu* and *paccaya* but we do not see this in early texts. For example, we find phrases

such as ‘*ko hetu, ko paccayo*’. The teaching was given to be made use of, to go to the other shore, not to get entangled in words.”

I ask, almost rhetorically, if this mess was created by taking the prescriptive teachings of the Buddha as descriptive.

“That’s why we said that it is when *pariyatti* (scriptural study) overtook *paṭipatti* (practice) that the decline started. How can one understand the texts without any practice? It would be just a collection of words. We need both: *sāttham sabyañjanaṃ* (right meaning and right phrasing). If the meaning is wrong, the phrasing would be wrong, and vice versa. However, if the meaning is right, even if the phrasing is wrong, there is the possibility of making corrections. Otherwise we’ll be passing the *piṭaka*, the basket, in the dark.”

“I’m reminded of one beautiful line from a story mentioned in the commentaries, which my teacher (Ven. Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera) used often in his Dhamma talks: *añño esa, āvuso, gatakassa maggo nāma* ^[1] — **This path is different, friend, to one who has travelled by it.**”

NOTES

1. See discussion on *Gantho* in Visuddhimagga, Chapter 3: Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddeso, Dasapalibodhavaṇṇanā

Correspondence with Bhikkhu Yogānanda

Part 1

Dear Bhante Nānananda,

In the *Cūla Suññata Sutta* we encounter the phrase ‘*Ayam pi kho animitto cetosamādhī abhisāñkhato abhisāñcetaṃyito*’. I find it difficult to understand how this experience of the ‘signless’ could be ‘prepared and thought out’. Is this *animitta cetosamādhī* different from the *animitta vimokkha*, and if so, how is one to understand it?

Dear Āyasmā Yogānanda,

The specially prepared (*abhi-samkhato*) and thought-out (*abhisāñcetaṃyito*) nature of *animitta cetosamādhī* is already implicit in the statement:

“*Punacapaṃ, Ānanda, bhikkhu amanasikarivā akiñcaññāyatanaśāññaṃ amanasikaritā nevaśāññānāśāññāyatanaśāññaṃ animittam cetosamādhim paṭicca manasikaroti ekattam. Tassa animitte cetosamādhimhi cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati adhimuccati.*”

– *Cūla Suññata S. MIII 107*

“Again, Ānanda, a monk – **not attending to** the perception of the sphere of nothingness, **not attending to** the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, **attends to the unity (*ekattam*) dependent on the signless concentration of mind. His mind leaps towards it (*pakkhandati*), acquires confidence in it, gets steadied in it and is resolute in it.**”

This state of concentration is one that is attained by forcibly shutting out some states of perception and developing a predilection for another state of concentration. Here is a preference for unity (*ekatta*) to the exclusion of diversity (*nānatta*).

It is still far from the supreme freedom ringing through the long phrase describing *aññāphala samādhi*.

“.....yā yaṃ bhagini samādhi na cābhiṇato na cāpanato na sasaṅkhāra niggayha vāritavato vimuttattā ṭhito ṭhitattā santusito santusitattā na paritassati, ayam bhagini samādhi aññāphalo vutto Bhagavatā.”

– A. IV 428

“.....Sister, that particular concentration which is **neither ‘turned – towards’ nor ‘turned outwards’, which is not a form of restraint forcibly held in place by preparations** – a concentration which is **stable owing to the fact of being emancipated** and is **one of contentment owing to its stability** and **wherein owing to contentment one is not vexed** – this concentration, sister, has been made known by the Fortunate One, as that which has knowledge (of Arahant hood) as its fruit (*aññāphalo*)”

For more details of this signless concentration one could explore the *Mahā Vedalla Sutta* where the conditions (*paccayā*) for its attainment, duration and coming out are given. The concluding section of that Sutta has a lively discussion on the two senses (the lower and the higher) in which the terms *appamānā cetovimutti*, *ākiñcaññā cetovimutti*, *suññatā cetovimutti* and *animittā cetovimutti* are used. The following declaration by Venerable Sariputta is enlightening as to the higher sense (or deeper sense) of *animittā cetovimutti*:

“rāgo kho āvuso nimittakaraṇo, doso nimittakaraṇo, moho nimittakaraṇo, te khināsavassa bhikkhuno pahīnā.....”

“Lust, friend, is something significant, hatred is something significant, delusion is something significant, they are abandoned in the influx-free monk...”

The very freedom from all preparations (*sankhārā*), assets (*upadhī*) and cravings (*tanhā*) is experienced as the signless (*animitta*), the void (*suññata*) and unestablished (*appanihita*) deliverance according to one’s individual forte in his triple attack on the citadel of TRUTH – so to speak – i.e. impermanence (*anicca*) suffering (*dukkha*) and not self (*anattā*). In fact, it is the proper beat and range of the Arahant in his *arahattaphala-samādhi*.

*“Yesam sannicayo natthi
Ye pariññāta bhojanā
suññato animitto ca
vimokkho yesa gocarō
ākāse va sakuntānam
gati tesam durannayā”*

“Those who do not accumulate and have comprehended food and whose range (lit. pasture) is the deliverance of the void and the signless, their track is hard to trace, like that of birds in the sky.”

Part 2

Dear Bhante Ñāṇananda,

We come across the phrase ‘*dasaṅgehi samannāgato arahā*’ where ‘*sammā diṭṭhi*’ is the first factor. It seems to me that the Arahat’s detachment for this right view he ‘possesses’ is implied by ‘*sammā vimutti*’. I would like to know from Bhante if this is correct.

Dear Āyasmā Yogānanda,

The Noble Eightfold Path is the ‘Raft’ described in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (M. I. 134), according to the ‘*Āsivisopama Sutta*’ (S. IV 175)

“*Kullanti kho bhikkhave ariyassetam atthaṅgikassa maggassa adhivacam*”

“The RAFT, O! monks is a synonym for the Noble Eightfold Path”

Now, *Sammādiṭṭhi* is the forerunner among the Path factors according to the *Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta* (M. III. 72)

“*Tatra, bhikkhave, sammāditthi pubbaṅgamā hoti*”

“Therein monks, Right View is the forerunner”

By the way, I happened to compare this role of Right View to the vanguard in conducting safely a V.I.P. through a crowd. In fact, this V.I.P. is the so called ‘self’. Spurious as he is, he has to be conducted beyond the Mara’s realm (‘*maccudheyya*’ – Dh.p.v.86).

Now let us listen to the grand-finale of the Buddha’s exhortation regarding the RAFT in *Alagaddūpama Sutta*:

“Evameva kho bhikkhave kullūpamo mayā dhammo desito nittharaṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya. Kullūpamaṃ vo bhikkhave ājānantehi dhammā pi vo pahātabbā, pageva adhammā.”

“Even so, monks, have I preached the Dhamma **to be comparable to a RAFT, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping.** Monks, when you comprehend the Dhamma, comparable to a RAFT **you should abandon even good states, how much more so bad states.**”

That one should not cling **even to ‘Right View’** is the substance of the Buddha’s catechism in *Maha Taṇhāsamkhaya Sutta*.

“Imaṃ ce tumhe bhikkhave diṭṭhiṃ evaṃ parisuddhaṃ evaṃ pariyodātaṃ allīyetha kelāyetha dhanāyetha mamāyetha, api nu tumhe bhikkhave kullūpamaṃ dhammaṃ desitam ājāneyyātha nittharaṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya.”

“Monks, purified and cleansed as this view is, if you cling to it, cherish it, treasure it, and call it ‘my own’ would you then comprehend the Dhamma that has been preached as comparable to a ‘Raft’ for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping.”

“No Venerable Sir”

(‘.....So you are right, after all’)

Part 3

Dear Bhante Ñāṇananda,

How are we to understand the *sekha* who has entered the path to stream entry but has not reached *phala* (namely the *saddhānusārī* and the *dhammānusārī*)?

Dear Āyasmā Yogānanda,

One can understand the differences between the *sekha* (**on the one hand**) and the *saddhānusārī* and the *dhammānusārī* (**on the other**) by examining the following quotations:

1. “*Evaṃ svākkhāto bhikkhave mayā dhammo uttāno vivaṭṭo pakāsito chinnapilotiko. Evaṃ svākkhāte bhikkhave mayā dhamme..... chinnapilotike yesaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ tīhi saṃyojanāni pahīnāni sabbe te sotāpannā avinipātadhammā niyūtā sambodhiparāyanā.*

Evaṃ svākkhāto bhikkhave mayā dhammo..... chinnapilotiko. Evaṃ svākkhāte bhikkhave mayā dhamme..... chinnapilotike ye te bhikkhū dhammānusārino, saddhānusārino sabbe te sambodhi parāyanā.”

– *Alagaddhūpama Sutta* (M. I. 141f)

“Monks, the Dhamma well proclaimed by me thus is clear, open, and evident and **free of hoodwink**.* In the Dhamma well proclaimed by me thus which is clear, open, evident and free of hoodwink those monks who have abandoned three fetters are all stream winners, not liable to fall into bad bourns, bound (for deliverance) and headed for enlightenment.

Monks, the Dhamma well proclaimed by me is clear free of hoodwink. In the Dhamma well

proclaimed free of hoodwink, those monks who are Dhamma followers or faith followers, are all headed for enlightenment.”

(* A suggested rendering for *chinnapilotika* – a controversial term among scholars)

– *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (M. I. 141f)

2. “*Sattime bhikkhave puggalā santo saṁvijjamānā lokasmim, katame satta? Ubhatobhāgavimutto, paññāvimutto, kāyasakki, diṭṭhippatto, saddhāvimutto, dhammānusārī, saddhānusārī..... Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo dhammānusārī?*

Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokkhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassivā viharati, paññāya cassa disvā āsavā aparikkhinā honti. Tathāgatappaveditā cassa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti, api cassa ime dhammā honti, seyyathīdaṃ, saddhindriyaṃ viriyindriyaṃ satindriyaṃ samādhindriyaṃ paññāindriyaṃ. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo dhammānusārī.

.....*Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo saddhānusārī?*

Idha bhikkhave puggalo ye te santā vimokkhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassivā viharati, paññāya cassa disvā āsavā aparikkhinā honti. Tathāgate cassa saddhāmattaṃ hoti pemamattaṃ apicassa ime dhammā honti, seyyathīdaṃ saddhindriyaṃ viriyindriyaṃ satindriyaṃ samādhindriyaṃ paññāindriyaṃ. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave saddhānusārī.”

– *Kītāgiri Sutta* (M. I. 477ff)

“Monks, there are seven kinds of persons to be found existing in the world. What seven? They are: one liberated in both ways, one liberated by wisdom, a body witness, one

attained to view, one liberated by faith, a Dhamma follower and a faith follower..... what kind of person is a Dhamma follower? Here some person does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his influxes are not yet destroyed by his seeing with wisdom, but with wisdom he has sufficiently gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata. Furthermore he has these qualities: the faith faculty, the energy faculty, the mindfulness faculty, the concentration faculty, and the wisdom faculty. This kind of person is called a Dhamma follower

What kind of person is a faith follower? Here some person does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his influxes are not yet destroyed by his seeing with wisdom, yet he has sufficient faith in and love for the Tathāgata. Furthermore he has these qualities: the faith faculty, the energy faculty, the mindfulness faculty, the concentration faculty, and the wisdom faculty. This kind of person is called a faith follower.”

– *Kitāgiri Sutta* (M. I. 477 f)

3. *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave ye te usabhā gopitaro gopariṇāyakā te tiriyaṃ gaṅgāya sotāṃ chetva sotthinā pāraṃ agamaṃsu, evameva kho bhikkhave ye te bhikkhū Arahanto khīṇāsavā vusitavanto katakaraṇīyā ohitabhārā anuppattasadatthā, parikkhīṇabhavasamyojanā sammadaññā vimuttā. Tepi tiriyaṃ māraṣṣa sotāṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ gatā.*

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave balavagāvo dammagāvo tiriyaṃ gaṅgāya sotāṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ agamaṃsu, evameva kho bhikkhave ye te bhikkhū pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātikā tatthapariniḥḥāyino

anāvattidhammā tasmā lokā. Te pi tiriyaṃ Mārassa sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ gamissanti.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave vacchatarā vacchatariyo tiriyaṃ gaṅgāya sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ agamaṃsu, evameva kho bhikkhave ye te bhikkhū tiṇṇaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā rāgadosamohānaṃ tanuttā sakadāgāmino saki deva imaṃ lokaṃ āgantvā dukkhassantaṃ santaṃ karissanti, te pi tiriyaṃ Mārassa sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ gamissanti.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave vacchakā kisabalakā tiriyaṃ gaṅgāya sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ agamaṃsu, evameva kho bhikkhave ye te bhikkhū tiṇṇaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā sotāpannā avinipātadhammā niyatā sambodhiparāyanā, te pi 'tiriyaṃ' mārassa sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ gamissanti.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave vacchako tarunako tāvadeva jātako mātugoravakena vuyhamāno tiriyaṃ gaṅgāya sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ agamāsi, evameva kho bhikkhave ye te bhikkhū dhammānusārino saddhānusārino te pi tiriyaṃ mārassa sotaṃ chetvā sotthinā pāraṃ gamissanti.

– *Cūla Gopālaka Sutta* (M. I. 266)

4. “Monks, just as the bulls, the fathers and leaders of the herd, breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore, so too, those monks who are Arahants with influxes destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of becoming and are completely liberated through final knowledge by breasting mara’s stream they have got safely across to the further shore.

Just as the strong cattle to be breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore, so too, those monks who with the destruction of the five lower fetters will reappear spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes) and

there attain final *Nibbāna* without ever returning from that world by breasting *Māra*'s stream they will get safely across to the further shore.

Just as the heifers and young oxen breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore, so too those monks, who with the destruction of the three fetters and with the attenuation of lust, hate and delusion, are once returners, returning once to this world to make an end of suffering.

Just as the calves and the feeble cattle breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore, so too those monks who, with the destruction of the three fetters are stream enterers, not liable to fall into bad bourns bound (for deliverance), headed for enlightenment – by breasting *māra*'s stream they too will get safely across to the further shore.

Just as that tender calf just born being urged by the mother's lowing, also breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore, so too those monks who are Dhamma followers and faith followers by breasting *māra*'s stream, they too will get safely across to the further shore."

– *Cūla Gopālakā Sutta* (M. I. 266)

5. *“Cakkhum bhikkhave aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī; sotāṃ aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī; ghānaṃ aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī; jivhā aniccā vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī; kāyo anicco vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī; mano anicco vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī.*

Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati ayaṃ vuccati saddhānusārī okkanto sammattaniyāmaṃ sappurisabhūmiṃ okkanto, vītivatto puthujjanabhūmiṃ abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchānayaṇiṃ vā pettivisayaṃ vā upapajjeyya;

abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātum yāva na sotāpattiphalaṃ sacchikaroti.

Yassa kho, bhikkhave, ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti, ayaṃ vuccati dhammānusārī, okkanto sammattaniyāmaṃ abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātum yāva na sotāpattiphalaṃ sacchikaroti.

Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ pajānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinipātadhammo niyato sambodhi-parāyano ti.”

– *Okkantika Samyutta* (S. III 225f.)

“Monks the eye is impermanent, changing becoming otherwise. The ear..... The nose,,,,,, The tongue..... The body..... The mind is impermanent, changing becoming otherwise. One who places faith in these teachings and resolves on them thus is called a faith follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness entered the plane of superior persons, transcended the plane of the worldlings. He is incapable of doing any deed by reason of which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal realm or in the domain of ghosts; he is incapable of passing away without having realized the fruit of stream entry.

One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a Dhamma follower one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons without having realized the fruit of stream entry.

One who knows and sees these teachings thus is called a stream enterer, no longer bound to the netherworld, fixed on destiny with enlightenment as his destination.”

– *Connected Discourse on Entering* (S. III 225 f.)

Part 4

2010-01-06

Dear Bhante Nānananda,

Is there any difference between *Sotāpattiphala Samāpatti* and *Arahattaphala Samāpatti*?

Dear Āyasmā Yogānanda,

Granted that all the four Supramundane Paths and Fruits imply a vision of *Nibbāna* and an insight into the law of Dependent Arising, one might wonder why there is a gradation in the experiences of the Fruit attributed to the 4 Noble Persons. If the ‘**taste**’ of the Four Fruits in the Supramundane – ‘**Bunch**’ is the same, why all this discrimination?

According to the Buddha, it is a question of **fetters** (to existence) and **influxes** (*āsavā*). It is true that even the Streamwinner gets the conviction that there is no **fear of death** where there is no craving and that **existence is dependent on grasping**. But he has not fully realized the **stilling of all preparations** (*sabbasankhārasamatha*) and the **complete destruction of craving** because of the tenacity of remaining fetters. To that extent his experience of *Nibbāna* is not on par with that of an Arahant who has destroyed the fetters and influxes. Even at the risk of possible misconstruing this gradation could be compared to that of a comma, a semicolon, a colon and a Full Stop!

1 2 3 4
, ; : .

Part 5

2010-12-25
Nāyana

Dear Bhante Ñāṇananda,

I hope Bhante is well and in good health and that the venerables are practicing peacefully and harmoniously.

I would be much grateful if Bhante could kindly clarify a Dhamma question I have which seems to be rather fundamental and also a matter of controversy since ancient times: **does the *phala* immediately follow the *magga*?**

Certain Suttas (such as the ones relating the story of *Sarakāni* – SN 55 24 & 25) seem to imply that there could be a significant time gap between the attainments of *magga* and *phala*, contrary to the traditional interpretation. It also seems rather redundant to have eight Ariyans if four of them are in their respective states for a split second only.

I hope it would not be too inconvenient for Bhante to send a short reply clarifying this issue. It would be of much benefit for many of us here.

With love and respect,
Yogānanda.

To: Venerable Yogānanda.

Dear Āyasmā Yogānanda,

I received your letter dated 2010-12-25. Your question.... does the *phala* immediately follow the *magga*? With its ‘poser’: It also seems rather redundant to have eight Ariyans if four of them are in their respective states for a split second?

Could be tackled as follows:

The Dhamma question you have raised (a matter of controversy since ancient times) stems from an insufficient understanding of the canonical definition of the 8 ‘*ariya puggalas*’. The relevant Sutta is the one found on pg 292 A IV.

“*Aṭṭhime bhikkhave puggalā āhuṇeyyā pāhuṇeyyā dakkhiṇeyyā añjalikaraṇīyā anuttaram puññakkhettaṃ lokassa. Katame aṭṭha?*”

Sotāpanno sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno, sakadāgāmi sakadāgāmiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno, anāgāmi anāgāmiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno, arahā arahattāyo paṭipanno,

Ime kho bhikkhave aṭṭha puggalā āhuṇeyya pe anuttaram puññakkhettaṃ lokassāti.

Cattāro ca paṭipannā – cattāro ca phale ṭhitā esa saṃgho ujubhūto – paññāsila samāhito yajamānānaṃ manussānaṃ – puññapekkhānapāṇinaṃ karotaṃ opadhikaṃ puññaṃ – sanghe dinnam mahapphalam”

“Monks there are these eight (types of) individuals worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation – the unsurpassed field of merit for the world. Which are the eight?

The stream-winner, the one who is treading the way of practice for the realization of the fruit of stream-winning.

The once-returner, the one who is treading the way of practice for the realization of the fruit of once-returning.

The non-returner, the one who is treading the way of practice for the realization of the fruit of non-returning.

The Arahant, the one who is treading the way of practice for Arahant-hood.

These O monks are the eight types of individuals worthy of gifts..... the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.

The treaders four
And the four on fruit established
This is the sangha (in virtue) upright
Endowed with wisdom, morality and concentration.

For those human beings who offer sacrifice
For beings that expect merit
For those whose assets are in merit
Whatever is given for the *Sangha* is of great fruit.”

The **key** to solve this long-standing controversy is the term *paṭipanna*. There is a subtle nuance by which the term ‘*magga*’ differs from *paṭipadā* though they are often juxtaposed as (apparent) synonyms. The peculiar wording – *phala – sacchikiriyāya – paṭipanno* (which sounds rather periphrastic) is enough to forewarn us against confusing it with ‘*lokuttara magga*’ (supra-mundane path) which incontrovertably is **immediate** (*ānantarika*). One may wonder why the first line of the summary verse does not run something like:

“*Cattāro ca maggaṭṭhā – cattāro ca phale ṭhitā*”

‘*Paṭipadā*’ (treading) certainly lasts more than a split second but the ‘*magga*’ (path) immediately yields ‘fruit’. Hence the indubitable asseveration in *Ratana Sutta*:

“*Yam Buddhaseṭṭho parivaṇṇayī sucim
samadhimānantarikaññamāhu*

*samādhinā tena samo na vijjati
idampi dhamme ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ
etena saccena suvatthi hotu”*

“That pure concentration which the supremely Awakened One extolled

That concentration which the Noble Ones call ‘immediate’

There is no concentration comparable to it
This is the excellent jewel nature of the Dhamma
By the power of this truth – may there be well-being”

The full import of the clumsy looking repetitive expression ‘*phala sacchikiriya paṭipanno*’ could be evaluated in the light of my long reply to one of your earlier questions.

“How are we to understand the ‘*sekha*’ who has entered the path of stream-entry but has not reached ‘*phala*’ (namely the ‘*saddhānusāri*’ and the ‘*dhammānusāri*’)?”

You may also listen to my Pahan Kanuwa Sermon No. 169 in which I touched on this ‘*magga-paṭipadā*’ problem (towards the end).

With mettā
K. Ñāṇananda.

Correspondence with Mrs. S. P.

Part 1

Hamburg 16.12.2005

Dear Venerable Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda,

So now I came to the decision to ask you directly. It's not easy to formulate the problem in a correct and clear way or to show the ground from which I ask and I know it's probably even much more effort to answer (except you're answering something like: "just give it up – all of it are constructions in the mind").

The intention is to get advice from you, someone who is deeply anchored in the Dhamma, so be sure whatever you will say, I will receive it with great appreciation.

So – as far as my understanding goes (there is no doubt, that awakening is possible):

The aim is the **total** end of *rāga, dosa, moha*.

But this status seems to be understandable in two kinds of possibilities:

1) Either *Nibbāna* within lifetime = *Nibbāna* with *khandhā* but without *upādāna* or

2) *parinibbāna* after giving up the will of continuing (*āyusañkhāro*) = *Nibbāna* without any *khandhā* = the end of all which can be thought, felt, perceived?

The impression of an objective existing world – independent from *avijjā* – is overwhelmed by an Arahant. The Arahant is no longer a prisoner of the *Paṭiccasamuppādo*.

If this is right, the following question seems logical: How can it be however possible, that there is action, perception, feeling etc. – an Arahant teaching the Dhamma for example?

Why does an Arahant seem to go back into all that, what he had given up (the 5 *khandhā*)?

May be in better words: the reason why the *khandhā* process is working is *avijjā* and thirst, both is ceased, the ending of **any** wishes was, what the *Ariya sāvako* was fighting for – after reaching this aim – how can any wish come up (even if it is not for his own profit but also to help someone). Viewed from a very high perspective isn't that 'someone' nothing more but a concept in mind, some sort of product of *avijjā*?

Or for another example, why does an Arahant (sometimes) commit suicide? (someone who – whatever kind of feeling is perceived – recognizes it neutral, just as a conditional feeling – even if it is dangerous for his life) why doesn't he accept it?

Doesn't it mean that *parinibbāna* is better or higher or something else than *Nibbāna*?

Is there some sort of rest *moha*, which however by an Arahant is recognized as *moha*?

Otherwise we would have (objective existing) *khandha* without *upādāna*? (at least for the while as long as the body is alive maybe the 'āyu' what is it exactly? Which role plays the *āyu* in context with *Paṭicca samuppāda*?)

So it seems as if there is somehow still a sort of rest suffering or rest delusion/illusion as long as *parinibbāna* is not reached?

In the Suttas it is said that most of the Arahants reach *paññāvimutti* not *cetovimutti*. But isn't *parinibbāna* always *paññāvimutti* and *cetovimutti*?

This would mean that they (the Arahants with *paññāvimutti*) manage to reach *cetovimutti* in the moment of death? Why now? How? What happens – was the release before not complete?

It is really difficult to understand why ‘someone’ is meant to walk around (why the process of being is continued) if ‘he’ is totally freed from illusion.

I think one of the traps of misunderstanding is maybe the interpretation of the word *Nibbāna*. The only way to describe *Nibbāna* is, what it is not and in using vocabulary of *samsāro*. For me in the highest sense it means: it’s impossible to reach or experience *Nibbāna* and there are no words for the unconditioned. But what can be experienced is the wisdom of the end of *samsāro* with all good feelings from *jhānas* etc., but both the wisdom and the feelings should be seen as *samsāric* phenomena, which will come to end after some time because there is no base for continuing anymore.

There is the idea of an Arahant having realized *Nibbāna* and being freed from *upādāna*, he was teaching and acting more than 40 years because of this imagination quite a lot of Buddhists think *Nibbāna* obviously can’t be ‘no-thing’. I think maybe *Nibbāna* and *samsāra* are mixed up.

Even the pure and freed and non-manifestative consciousness of an Arahant is conditioned or do you see it different?

I think all these questions actually are pointing mainly to the same. I hope I could transport the difficulties/the contradiction without sounding presumptuous (arrogant) or in whatever way not appropriate, please forgive all this incompetency.

Pothgulgala Aranya,
Pahan Kanuwa, Kandededara,
Devalegama
06.01.2006

Dear Upāsikā S.P.,

I received your letter dated 16.12.2005. Many of your Dhamma questions are quite pertinent because generally we have too idealistic a picture of an Arahant. But perhaps you can find an answer to them once the distinction between *sa-upādisesa Nibbānadhātu* and *anupādisesa Nibbānadhātu* is understood. I have tried to explain this distinction particularly in my N.M.S. Sermon Nos. 18 & 19.

In the relevant Sutta of *Itivuttaka* the following description is given of the Arahant in *sa-upādisesa Nibbānadhātu*.

“..... His five sense faculties still remain and due to the fact that they are not destroyed, he experiences **likes and dislikes, pleasures and pains**. That extirpation of lust, hate and delusion in him, monks, is known as the *Nibbāna* element with residual clinging.”

So an Arahant is not an insensate ‘vegetable’. In his day to day life, he is subject to pleasurable and painful feelings like any other person, but he is able to overcome them to the extent he brings in **mindfulness, concentration and wisdom** he has already developed. Hence we are told that the *Tathāgata* experiences taste but does not experience any attachment to it. (*Brahmāyu Sutta* M. II 138). It is the same when it comes to painful feelings. When a splinter from the rock hurled by Devadatta Thera cut the Buddha’s foot, he experienced excruciating pains which however he bore up with mindfulness so much so that the deities praised him for his endurance.

What accounts for the mission of the Buddha and the Arahants (teaching the Dhamma, helping others etc.) is their past karmic background which keeps them still **alive** like the mud and water in the lotus pond. It is our **academic seclusion** which prevents us from appreciating the beauty and fragrance of a lotus in its proper place of origin. The Buddhas and Arahants are no **freaks** in the social context. They have still a role to play depending on their past karmic background with all its ups and downs – **the 8 worldly vicissitudes** (*aṭṭhalokadhamma*). The Buddha declares that he has *karuṇā* (compassion) and *anukampā* (sympathy) for beings, far more than his disciples. Some of his chief disciples who were Arahants distinguished themselves in this or that field so that the Buddha declared them **foremost** in those particular fields even describing the past ‘*kamma*’ for which they deserved the distinction. This karmic background accounts for their ‘**shortcomings**’ as well – physical and mental. Sometimes the Buddha as the teacher had to ‘pull up’ those Arahant disciples – of course, not to the extent of calling them ‘**vain-fellows**’ (*moghapurisā*) for certain faults of commission and omission.

Though the ‘**hang-on**’ of ‘*upādāna*’ is over, there is still the residual ‘**hang-over**’ – ‘*upādi*’. This is the imperfection in *sa-upādisesa Nibbānadhātu*. That is perhaps why Venerable Sariputta says that he is awaiting death like one who has done his job is awaiting his wages (Thera V1003). The Arahant has a reassuring **foretaste** of that final release in his *phala-samāpatti* **which is also called *parinibbāna*** in some contexts. In fact, the Arahant is **in his element** only when he is in *phala-samāpatti* (*aññāvimokkha*), (*aññāphala*) with its triple deliverance – ‘*animitta*’ (signless), ‘*appaṇihita*’ (undirected) and ‘*suññata*’ (void). That is his true pasture (*gocara*). *Nibbāna* is explicitly called ‘the cessation of the six sense bases’ (*saḷāyatana nirodha*). But even this ability to attain to the ‘*phala*’ is still subject to his karmic background. That is why Venerable Maha Moggallāna with all his *iddhi* – powers, failed to escape the 500 bandits in

their third attempt to kill him. The path to attain the ‘unconditioned’ (*asankhatagāmiṃmagga*) is still conditioned. The Noble Eight Fold Path is the highest of all things conditioned (see *Aggappasāda Sutta* A.N. 34). It is in the last moment of an Arahant’s life that the ‘*phala-samāpatti*’ comes perfect as the famous Ratana Sutta describes in the verse beginning with “*khīnam purāṇam.....*” and ending with the line “*nibbanti dhirā yathāyampadīpo*” – **the last flicker of the lamp** when the wick and the oil are about to be exhausted. This is the final extinguishment or extinction which carries the certitude that the flame has nothing more to grab for a **flare-up** in another womb.

Regarding the question of ‘*āyu*’ – Venerable Sāriputta points out in *Mahāvedalla Sutta* (M. I 295) that there is a mutual relationship between ‘*āyu*’ and ‘*usmā*’ (heat) while the five sense faculties (*pañcīndriyāni*) subsist on *āyu*. It is again a case of dependent-arising.

The transcendence of the world – the ‘seeing-through’ of the dark curtain of ‘*avijjā*’ is brought about by **penetrative *paññā*** – aided by *sati* and *samādhi*. The world is steeped in the darkness of ‘*avijjā*’ and ‘*papañca*’ at **its own level of reality**. In the light of wisdom ‘*nippapañca*’ the Arahant experiences that transcendence summed up in our theme. “This is peaceful, this is excellent..... the extinction.” It is a case of switching-on and off of the facade of *papañca* best exemplified by the riddle-like lines.

“*na pāraṃ diguṇaṃ yanti
na idaṃ ekaguṇaṃ mutaṃ*”
– Sn. V. 714

They go not **twice** to the farther shore
Nor yet is it reckoned a ‘**going once**’ !

The **LOTUS-philosophy** of being **in** the world but not **of** the world is truly difficult to understand. We tend to forget about the **mud** and the **water** that still sustain and keep fresh the lotus in the pond!

Commentaries record an instance in which a meditative monk was challenged with a barrage of questions by an academic monk about the true state of an Arahant. He listened through with patience and remarked:

“The path, friend, is different for one who has traversed it!”

(i.e. a difference between the **MAP** and the **TRIP!**)

I shall limit myself to these few observations because this is an area where one can easily be **misunderstood**, **misquoted** and **misinterpreted**.

With mettā,
K. Ñāṇananda

Part 2

Hamburg, 16.03.2010

Dear Venerable Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda,

Recently Bhikkhu Anālayo was so kind to send to me your essay ‘*Nibbāna* and the fire simile’. Thank you very much for asking him to do this!!

The fire simile is really one of my favorite themes in meditating about *Nibbāna* and for directing the activities of the mind more and more to abandoning – referenced to the ‘seeing through the net’. Actually I think this simile can’t be mistaken, and it can help to accept, that the ‘going out’ is possible and that is at last the only solution for the final finishing of the saṃsāric round (an acceptance even against the habitual emotional tendencies which always want to grasp).

After this, the main spiritual work is located in correcting the false habitual views and actions in upholding the ‘I in the world thinking’ and all it’s connected servings and delusions. So, to get the turn from worldly interests directed to a spiritual development most of us lay people need the good input of dhamma teachings over and over again.

The meditation about the fire simile, or something similar like (for example) the five *khandhā*, is of great benefit and will sooner or later conduct to a stabilization and freeing of the heart and/or mind. The illustrative story of Dabba Mallaputto and his extraordinary death is very impressive and may inspire to a lot of *kusala* thoughts, or may arouse some additional effort. So it may happen, from time to time, that the mind reaches a more profound level of collection and understanding, and this freeing experience without preconceived views shows as a result, that we don’t even need to make a decision of giving up this or that. When the mind is really clear and strong, *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* are evident

and there is no longing for all such useless stuff (however great it seemed to be before) which is usually summarized under the term 'world', necessarily including all the concepts of personality views.

But of course, what in fact is required to come to these reliefs is the establishing of right moral conduct and the continuous wish and effort for right understanding and total clearness.

Why do I write this? Well, to express and share my joy about the aim, which the Buddha proclaimed. To read and to talk about the deep points in the dhamma is inspiring and very helpful for the weak parts of the undeveloped mind, and so you see, that your work, in explaining and confirming and highlighting the dhamma in its deep and original meaning, is a great verification and encouragement for us.

In case you would like me to type some of your texts with the computer, please let me know.

So thank you very much for all of your work.

With deep respect and many good wishes for you,

S.P.

Part 3

Hamburg, March 11, 2015

Dear Venerable Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda,

Now it's already quite a long time since you've left Pothgulgala Aranyaya. Sri told me that, by good chance, a new place is in reach, with the help of the lay-community. I can imagine that a changing of the outer conditions brings a lack of calm and plenty of all the other accompanying uncomfortable effects. So I really hope that the efforts are successful and the strenuous situation for you will calm down.

If my letter, with some more questions, is producing too much load for you, and which is in itself already somehow a tiresome request, please forgive me, that I came up with it and please ignore it and I will just translate.

So just as a trial – here are the questions:

Question 1: idappaccayatā

which you translate as 'a relation of **this** and **that**'

(Nib. Sermon 1, page 11, section 1; page 12, section 1)

(Nib. Sermon 2, page 29, section 2 ff. and page 31) and similarly,

(Nib. Sermon 4, page 86, section 2+4)

And the explanation in Pāli:

*“iti imasmim sati idam hoti
imassupādā idamuppajjati
imasmim asati idam na hoti
imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati”*

which you translate:

“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.”

My question:

Why do you prefer to use **only ‘this’** in your translation of the four lines? For me it seems to be quite ‘near by’ to use ‘that’ here as well, to denote the relating (but **different**) object or aspect. Of course I know that ‘this’ and ‘that’ are relative terms, which can easily change their position depending on the point of view, however in this context with the 12 links of the *paṭicca samuppāda* for me it seems to be a little irritating to use only the term ‘this’. In ‘Concept and Reality’ (1971, page 88) **you use both terms**, translating;

“when this is, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises; when this is not, that does not come to be, with the stopping of this, that is stopped.”

Which you seem to have changed in later printings (version 2012, in the internet, page 85).

Question 2: *ajjhataṃ-bahiddhā* (difficult theme for me – I hope I can manage to explain my thoughts)

In *Nibbāna* Sermon 4, page 91/92 you are talking in detail about the relativity of ‘*ajjhata*’ and ‘*bahiddhā*’ or ‘internal’ and ‘external’ and you point out the necessity not to take these terms dogmatically.

Then continuing... ‘more strictly rendered, *ajjhata* means inward and *bahiddhā* means outward’. And with the example of the modern medicine and people who take in artificial parts into their bodies, you point out:

‘That is why, in this context *ajjhata* has a deeper significance than its usual rendering as ‘one’s own’. (with what I can easily retrace and agree with, in this case).

So, what I get from the above statements are mainly 2 aspects;

- 1) The **relativity** of these only seemingly opposite or different things – I think, I've understood and accepted this fact, since a long time.

However, what is in a changing process, only since quite a short time, is the relevance of this view of my active practice. With your declaration, I got the initial hint to see the importance and method of using this view somehow as a mental operation scalpel, which is needed to be used to dissect the habitual and subtle conceits tangled in duality!!!

- 2) In consequence of their relativity the two terms seem to have also a flexible **range of meaning** in the suttas.

And although their differences should not be overstrained, still each of the words seem to have its justification in sharpening the one or other aspect.

On the way to overcome the mental prison of duality in some perspectives it looks like being helpful to work with the two terms (not dogmatically of course). Just from a pragmatic point of view, it sometimes seems to be adequate to differentiate between 'mine' and 'yours', 'inside' and 'outside' etc. and that's the background of my related question depending on the translation/interpretation of the following passage; (Nib. Sermon 6, page 122 at the beginning Pāli Sutta: A II 157 *Cetanā Sutta* and SN II 37 *Bhumijasuttaṃ*)

Kāye vā, bhikkhave, sati kāyasañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ suhadukkhāṃ.

Vācāya vā, bhikkhave, sati vācīsañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ suhadukkhāṃ.

Mane vā, bhikkhave, sati manosañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ suhadukkhāṃ.

Avijjāpaccayā va.

Your translation: ‘.....inward pleasure and pain ...’.

Bhikkhu Bodhi translates in the same way as you do: “Bhikkhus, when there is the body, then because of bodily volition pleasure and pain arise internally...”

On the other hand Woodward translates: “Monks, where there is bodily action, there arises to the self pleasure or pain caused by intention of bodily action.”

And similarly in their German edition of the *Cetanāsutta* Nyanatiloka and Nyanaponika relate the ‘*ajjhattam*’ to the person who experiences. (Ist, ihr Mönche, der **Körper** da, so erwächst **einem** infolge der Willensäußerung in körperlichen Werken Wohl oder Wehe.)

My translation of their whole sentence: “Monks, if a body is there, then for that one (or oneself) there arises pleasure or pain caused by intention of bodily action.”

So here you seem to interpret the use of *ajjhatta* and *bahiddhā* in the same way as in the example with the artificial parts in the body, whereas some others here prefer the ‘classical’ rendering.

My question:

Reading yours or Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation there rises up an irritation about the meaning.

What I tend to read with your translation, is, that pleasure and pain are more or less **limited** to an inward experience, and the term ‘inward’ is automatically associated with some sort of feelings which are not right away triggered through an external/outward experience through the senses.

If this is the sense you use this word in this context, **then it’s hard for me to see, why pleasure and pain should only be limited to an inward experience.** If a body is experienced, the analysis of my life-experiences brings to me the result that much

outward pain, related to this body (for example injury, hunger etc) is also possible/happening.

Instead – if I see the relation of **inward** and **outward** in this context **between the one who experiences and the others**, it doesn't produce difficulties, but seem to make sense, especially with the continuing text in the sutta, which puts much emphasis on the theme of volitional actions and its consequences in connection to the relation between the one actor and the other actors.

And taking up again the aspect of the range of the words depending on the context I'd like to draw in your use of the words in Nib. Sermon 26, page 550 & 3. In context with a magician and the standard formula about consciousness you translate '*ajjhataṃ*' apparently in the wider sense as well, as '**consciousness in oneself**' in opposition to the external consciousness. (In case, that I understood it in the right way)

So in this last case, for me it is very meaningful to use '*ajjhataṃ*' to designate oneself and '*bahiddhā*' for the consciousness of others. (Although in this context consciousness is something which takes place inwardly, the weight of the message seems to lie on the sense: whatever consciousness it is all about, mine or others, it's impermanent etc. and similarly with the other four components of the *Khandhā*)

Actually there are more questions, but for today I decide to stop here. Perhaps I should just translate and do not ask so much!? May be these are just very subjective impressions and should be left aside?

With deep respect, great thankfulness and plenty of good wishes for your welfare.

Yours Sincerely,
Upāsikā S. P.

26/03/2015

Dear Upāsikā S. P.,

I received your letter of the 11th, with the problems you came up in translating my *Nibbāna* Sermons. I can easily understand your problems because I myself have sometimes given the following simile to illustrate the seriousness of the task of translating from one language to another.

‘It is like a mother’s attempt to **breast feed** a new born child. She has first of all to digest and assimilate the food she takes and convert it into **RED BLOOD**. Then, with her **love** for the child, she has to convert it into **WHITE MILK!**

Well, then, let me try to answer your questions.

Answer 1: ‘*idappaccayatā*’

You see an incongruity in my translating ‘*idappaccayatā*’ by ‘relatedness of **this to that**’ and my translating the basic principle of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as follows:

‘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’

I must confess that I was well aware of the incongruity and was hard put to find an alternative rendering to bring out more faithfully the depth of meaning ingrained in the term ‘*idappaccayatā*’. As a matter of fact, in my first edition of the *Magic of the Mind*, I have followed the standard translation of the formula:

‘**This** being – **that** comes to be’ etc.

But changed it in my later editions to

‘**This** being – **this** comes to be’ etc.

We must not forget that the terms ‘*Paṭiccasamuppāda*’ and ‘*idappaccayatā*’ are ‘strangers’ to the contemporary Indian Philosophical thought. But my problem is that when I try to make ‘sense’ of these terms for the Western reader, content with standard translations, there is considerable risk in (mis)-taking it for ‘non-sense’.

With all that risk, I gave a more reasoned explanation for my controversial rendering in my recent series of 20 sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in Sinhala. Already in my *Nibbāna* sermons I made a breakthrough for the Sinhala (listeners and) readers since almost all preachers and authors had followed the standard rendering: ‘*meva ati kalhi – eya veyi*’ etc.

At least a few discerning readers have appreciated my thought-provoking rendering of the deep dictum enshrining the **HEART** of the Law of Dependent Arising **faithfully to the original Pāli**.

To go back to the Buddha-word, what is easily overlooked is the fact that the original Pāli phrasing has the **same awkwardness** on first hearing, which is why it proved to be an ‘eye-opener’ (Dhamma-eye) to many ever since. Had the Buddha wished to put across a relation between ‘**This**’ and ‘**That**’ he would have worded it as;

‘*imasmiṃ sati – etaṃ hoti*’

I have highlighted the validity of this apparently awkward formula by showing how the Law holds good for any two links in the formula of 12 links – **taken up in pairs as a context in itself**.

If I may suggest another ‘**awkward**’ rendering for ‘*idappaccayatā*’ it would be something like:

‘**This – this** relatedness!!’

Answer 2: ‘ajjhataṃ-bahiddhā’

This is a complicated subject because it concerns a variety of contexts. I shall try to take them up one by one.

1. *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*

In the thematic paragraph at the end of each subsection one finds:

(eg) *iti ajjhataṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati bahiddhā vā*

ajjhata-bahiddhā vā

Before getting down to the question of a proper rendering for the two terms, let me say something about the ‘purpose’ of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in general. In fact I have already stated it in just a few words in my ‘Towards Calm and Insight’ (p.54).

Satipaṭṭhāna:

‘An objective approach to understand **the subjective** in one’s experience’.

If you can penetrate into this aphorism, you can solve many of your problems.

It is because of this objective approach that we get the following apparently awkward phrase like:

‘*kāye kāyānupassī viharati*’ etc

– in the case of all four *Satipaṭṭhāna* objects.

Whatever the language may be, this could easily irritate a translator for he has to give a clumsy rendering like:

‘contemplating **body in the body**’

The purpose of ‘*sati*’ aided by ‘*sampajañña*’ is to understand ‘body’ as SUCH without any subjective colouring.

That is why ‘internal’ and ‘external’ are better suited than ‘oneself’ and ‘another’.

I have also drawn attention to the significance of the peculiar compound ‘*ajjhatta-bahiddhā*’ with reference to my simile of ‘sharpening a razor’. The transcending of the duality occurs when the contemplation is ‘**razor-edge**’ **SHARP**.

2. The same principle of transcending the duality of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ is implicit in the meditation on elements in the *Dhātu-vibhanga Sutta* (M. III 240), though the approach there is directly through ‘*anattasaññā*’. There the duality is between;

(eg) ‘*ajjhattikā paṭhavidhātu*’ and ‘*bāhirā paṭhavidhātu*’.

Here of course, one might understand by it the earth-element **in oneself** and **external to oneself** – just to make the ‘attack’ on ‘self’ all the more trenchant. In fact the descriptive phrase;

‘*ajjhattaṃ paccattaṃ kakkhalaṃ kharigataṃ upādinnaṃ*’

– bordering on the modern usage ‘**organic**’ as distinguished from ‘**the inorganic**’.

3. ‘*ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkham*’ (inward pleasure and pain)

The passage beginning with – ‘*kāye vā bhikkhave sati kāyasañcetanāhetu uppajati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkham*’ etc. ending with ‘*avijjāpaccayā vā*’ – has a very deep dimension of meaning.

If I may summarize, so long as one takes seriously the **concept of a body as really existing**, then, due to **intention based on that concept, there arises inwardly pleasure and pain – due to ignorance**. What is the ignorance? Taking ‘body’ at its ‘face-value’ as something compact – grossest level of which is hinted at by the term ‘*sat-kāya-diṭṭhi*’ (lit. ‘**existing-body-view**’) ie. taking body as a ‘**unit**’.

The same can be applied to ‘*vācā*’ (speech) and ‘*vacī-sañcetanā*’ – intention based on speech as a **unit**.

– and to ‘*mano*’ (mind) and ‘*mano-sañcetanā*’ – intention based on mind as a **unit**.

I wonder whether your rendering can do justice to the depth of this passage.

I may briefly allude to that level of ‘**EXPERIENCE**’ where these ‘units’ are no more, and that is ‘*arahattaphalasamādhī*’ with its ‘*anidassana viññāna*’.

You may also examine the ‘*Sakalika Sutta*’ (S. I. 27) as an illustration of that level of freedom from **inward PAIN**.

I think the series of 20 sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* I am now translating will clear up many of your problems in translating my *Nibbāna* sermons. Already there is much eagerness among those who have heard about it from Sri Lankans abroad – to get the English translation. So far I have translated 9 sermons but I had some difficulty in getting them correctly typed out. I have already asked Mr C. who is helping me in that matter, to release by e-mail whatever sermons I have ‘okayed’ to Dhamma thirsty readers abroad. I have included your name and e-mail address also in that list.

I greatly appreciate your devotion to the responsible task of translating my *Nibbāna* series – like a **loving mother** getting ready to ‘**breast-feed**’ the (German) children. I may mention that a group of Chinese *dāyakas* and *dāyikās* have brought out a library edition of all 7 volumes of the N.M.S. series.

Best wishes for your good health and progress!

With mettā,
K. Ñāṇananda

Correspondence with Mr. U.M.

Part 1

20.11.2007

Most Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thero
Pothgulgala Aranyaya
Dewalegama.

Most Venerable Sir,

It was after posting a copy of the e-mail (sent to Mr A.) to you, I realised that in one of the sermons (6th sermon) of ‘*nivane niweema*’ you have pointed out that cessation of perception and feeling (CPF) is a deep state of tranquility absorption which is misunderstood as *Nibbāna*. This explanation is quite in accordance with the *Culavedalla Sutta* which states that a bhikkhu only after emerging from CPF will experience the three contacts viz *animitta*, *sunnata* and *appanihitta*. In other words he is in the proper state of *Nibbāna* not while in CPF but immediately after he emerges from it.

But some other suttas seem to suggest the CPF both **deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom (*ceto vimutti* and *panna vimutti*)**. For example, in the *Mahānidāna sutta* the Buddha, while explaining these absorptions to Ven. Ananda, says: “By transcending the sphere of neither perception-nor-non perception one enters and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling. That is the eighth liberation. ‘Ananda, when once a monk attains these eight liberations in forward order, in reverse order and has gained by his own super knowledge here and now both the destruction of the corruptions and the uncorrupted liberation of the heart and liberation by wisdom, that monk is called **both ways liberated**’ and Ananda, there is no other way of

both-ways-liberation, that is more excellent and perfect than this.”

Also in the *Poṭṭhapada sutta*, the Buddha after explaining the attainment of cessation by successive steps praises it: “What do you think, Poṭṭhapada? Have you heard of this before...”

Also in *Mahavedalla Sutta* Ven. Sariputta explains that when a bhikkhu is in a state of CPF his faculties become exceptionally clear!

Of course, it is only those who have the ability to get into the eight absorptions (*asthasamāpatti*) could experience CPF.

I most respectfully invite you Ven. Sir, to kindly clarify these puzzling points of dhamma for us.

May the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem endow you Ven. Sir, with more wisdom and protect you for continued valuable service to the sasana!

Your most respectfully,
Upāsaka U.M.

6-12-2007

Dear Upāsaka U.M.,

The questions you have raised in your letter dated 20/11/2007 could be boiled down to the following moot points:

1. What is the relationship between the cessation of perception and feeling (CPF – ‘*saññavedayita nirodha samāpatti*’) and *Nibbāna*?
2. Do they mean the same thing or can one distinguish between them?

I. *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (D I 178ff.) could be a good starting point for the discussion. It portrays the climate of opinion prevalent among contemporary sectarians regarding the question of the cessation of higher levels of perception (*abhisaññānirodha*). The burning question of the day was:

‘*Kathaṃ nukho abhisaññānirodho hoti?*’

‘How does the cessation of higher levels of perception come about?’

The purely ‘*samatha*’ (tranquility) approach of those ascetics under the influence of ‘*sakkāya diṭṭhi*’ (personality view) ended up with the dilemma:

‘Perception is a disease, a boil, a dart. But the absence of perception is a bewilderment (*sammoha*).

This is peaceful, this is excellent, that is to say, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.’

They were on a ‘**see-saw**’ caught up between the horns of a dilemma. Several theories on the question of the arising and cessation of perception find mention in *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (D. I 180). They are:

1. A man’s perceptions arise and cease without any cause or condition (*ahetu appaccaya*).

2. Perception is a man's soul. It comes and goes. When it comes one is percipient when it goes one is not percipient.
3. There are recluses and Brahmins of great psychic power & influence. They drag in and drag out that man's perception...
4. There are gods of great psychic power & influence. They drag in and drag out that man's perception.

The Buddha's solution to this vexed problem follow the norm of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*)

‘Due to causes and conditions a man's perception arises and ceases.’

(*‘sahetu sappaccaya purisassa saññā uppajjati nirujjhatipi’*)

The entire course of training based on the principle of (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is **outlined** in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* with the refrain-like dictum.

*‘sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjati
sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhati’*

‘By training one perception arises
By training one perception ceases’

The crucial point at which the subtlest *saññā* is transcended is described as follows:

‘yato kho Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu saka saññī hoti so tato amutra tato amutra anupubbena saññaggaṃ phusati tassa saññagge ʈhitassa evaṃ hoti: (Tr. From ‘there’ to ‘here’ from ‘there’ to ‘here’ in gradual stages)

*cetayamānassa me pāpiyo acetayamānassa me seyyo...
yaññūnāhaṃ na ceteyyaṃ na abhisāṅkhareyyaṃ...
so na ceva ceteti na abhisāṅkharoti. Tassa acetayato anabhisāṅkharoto tā ceva saññā nirujjhanti aññā ca oḷārikā saññā na uppajjanti. So nirodhaṃ phusati. Evaṃ kho*

Poṭṭhapāda anupubbābhisaññānirodha sampajāna samāpatti hoti.

Gradually passing from one subtle stage of perception to a higher and subtler stage of perception one attains to the highest level of perception (*saññagga*) ie. the sphere of nothingness which has as its object the thought ‘There is Nothing’ (*natthi kiñci*). Reflecting on the perils of ‘*cetanā*’ and ‘*abhisamkhāra*’ (intention and karmic preparation) one desists therefrom. It is then that one attains (lit. touches) *Nirodha* or cessation.

Buddha winds up with the conclusive statement: ‘*Evam kho Poṭṭhapāda anupubbābhisaññānirodha sampajāna samāpatti hoti.*’

Thus O! Poṭṭhapāda is the gradual attainment with full awareness to the cessation of higher levels of perception.

The purpose of this disquisition is to answer the ‘burning question’ of the day among ascetics.

‘How does the cessation of higher levels of perception come about?’

The Buddha’s answer has to be understood within the context. The unusually long compound draws our attention to two key terms in particular – ‘*anupubba*’ – gradual and ‘*sampajāna*’ – full-awareness – which are suggestive of the *vipassanā* approach.

It is noteworthy that ‘*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana samāpatti*’ (the attainment of the sphere of neither perception nor non perception is called ‘*sañkhārāvesesa samāpatti*’ attainment with a residue of *sañkhāras* or preparations. The decision at the ‘*saññagga*’ or highest point of perception to desist from ‘*cetanā*’ and ‘*abhisamkhāra*’ does away with the residual *sañkhāras* prompted by the self-bias. This is the secret of the ‘breakthrough’ introduced by the Buddha.

Now, one who attains to *Nirodha Samāpatti* invariably **awakens to *Nibbāna*** through the triple deliverance – *Animitta* (signless), *Appaṇihita* (undirected) and *Suññata* (void).

II. This fact comes to light from the discussion between Visākha Upāsaka and the Arahant nun Dhammadinnā in the *Cūla Vedalla Sutta*.

Visākha: *Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitam panayye bhikkhum kati phassā phusanti?*

Lady when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, how many kinds of contact touch him?

Dhammadinnā: *Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitam kho āvuso visākha bhikkhum tayo phassā phusant suññato phasso, animitto phasso, appaṇihito phassoti.*

Friend Visākha when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling three kinds of contact touch him: voidness contact, signless contact, undirected contact.

Visākha: *Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa panayye bhikkhuno kimninnam cittam hoti kimponam kimpabbhāranti?*

Lady when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, to what does his mind incline to what does it lean, to what does it tend?

Dhammadinnā: *Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa kho āvuso visākha bhikkhuno vivekaninnam cittam hoti vivekaponam vivekapabbhāranti.*

Friend Visākha when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling his mind inclines to seclusion, leans to seclusion, tends to seclusion.

The commentary explains: ‘inclines to seclusion, *viveka* means *Nibbāna*.’ (M.A. 306 විවෙක නින්නනති ආදිසු නිබ්බානං විවෙකො නාම)

It is noteworthy that ‘*animitta*’, ‘*appaṇihita*’ and ‘*suññata*’ are even called the three doorways to deliverance (*vimokkhamukha*).

III. In the *Mahānidāna Sutta* a distinction is drawn between a dead person and one who has attained to C.P.F. In both *kāyasaṅkhāra*, *vacīsaṅkhāra* and *cittasaṅkhāra* have ceased and subsided. In the former vitality is exhausted, heat has gone down and sense faculties are fully broken up (විපරිනින්නානි), but in the latter vitality is **not** exhausted, heat has not gone down and faculties are exceptionally clean (විපසන්නානි).

Here it may be pointed out the term ‘*vippasannāni*’ contrasted with ‘*viparibhinnāni*’ does not mean that the faculties are **active** – only that they are **intact and fresh** i.e. not out of order.

IV. *Aññā* – full comprehension is a term implying final convincing knowledge of Arahant hood (cf. ‘*aññaṃ vyākaraṭi*’ – declaration of one’s attainment to Arahant hood).

aññāphalasaṃpatti, *aññāphalo*, *aññāvimokkha* and *aññāpaṭivedha* are terms implying the knowledge of the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

In a discourse at A. IV 422 (නවක නිපාත) the Buddha declares:

‘*Paṭhamamampāhaṃ bhikkhave jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayāṃ vadāmi, dutiyampāhaṃ ... tatiyampāhaṃ ... catutthampāhaṃ ... ākāsaṇāñcāyatanampāhaṃ ... viññānañcāyatanampāhaṃ ... ākiñcaññāyatanampāhaṃ ...*

nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃpāhaṃ bhikkhave nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi.

That is to say he grants the possibility of attaining the extinction of influxes or *Nibbāna* depending on the jhānic levels.

He explains the procedure in each case, upto *ākiñcaññāyatana* which is the limit of *saññāsamāpatti* thus:

Eg. In the case of 1st jhāna:

‘Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu paṭhamam jhānam upasampajja viharati. So yadeva tattha hoti rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ saṅkhāragataṃ viññāṅgataṃ te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati. So tehi dhammehi cittam paṭivāpeti. So tehi dhammehi cittam paṭivāpetvā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasamharati. ‘etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasankhārasamatho Nibbānanti. So tattha ṭhito āsavānaṃ khayam pāpuṇāti. No ce āsavānaṃ khayam pāpuṇāti teneva dhammarāgena tāya dhammanandiyā pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko hoti tattha parinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā.’

Here monks, a monk attains to the first jhāna. Whatever things that pertain therein to form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness, he contemplates them as impermanent as suffering as a malady as a gangrene as a dart as a misery as a disease as alien as disintegrating as void as notself. He weans his mind from those things. And having weaned his mind from those things he focuses his mind on the deathless element thus. ‘This is peaceful, this is excellent *Nibbāna.*’ He there and then attains to the extinction of influxes. If he does not attain to the extinction of influxes, by the attachment and delight in that very mind object with the exhaustion of the lower fetters he becomes one of spontaneous re-birth destined to attain final extinction there without coming back from that world.

After this thematic description of the procedure upto *ākiñcaññāyatana*, the Buddha makes the following significant pronouncement:

‘Iti kho bhikkhave yāvatā saññāsamāpatti tāvatā aññāpaṭivedho. Yāni ca kho imāni bhikkhave āyatanāni nevasaññānāsaññāsamāpatti ca saññāvedayitanirodho ca jhāyīthete bhikkhave bhikkhuhi samāpattikusalehi samāpattivuṭṭhānakusalehi samāpajjivā vuṭṭhahitvā sammā akkhātabbānūti vadāmi ti.’

Thus O! monks as far as is the range of attainment to perceptions so far is there a penetration into full comprehension. But monks as to these two spheres namely the attainment of neither perception nor non-perception and the cessation of perception and feelings, monks I say that those meditative monks skilled in attainment and in rising from attainment should having attained to them rise from them and reflect well over them.

V. The difference between C.P.F. and *arahattaphala-samāpatti* is that while in the latter state one is ‘percipient (conscious) and awake’ (*saññi samāno jāgaro*) as is evident from the M.P.S. episode of the Buddha being **unaware** of the torrential downpour with streaks of lightning and peals of thunder while being awake and conscious. What he was conscious of was the very cessation of existence (*‘bhava nirodho Nibbānam’*) summed up in the dictum *‘etaṃ santam... etc’*. ‘This is peaceful this is excellent... etc’. The same experience is called *‘saḷāyatananirodha’* cessation of the six sense spheres. Nibbānic consciousness is **non-manifestative consciousness** – *anidassanaviññāṇa* which does not manifest a *nāma-rūpa*. Here is the blissful experience of *‘bhavanirodha’* in the light of *Paññā* (wisdom).

This is not the case with the CPF. As Ven Dhammadinnā Therī explains in reply to Visākha Upāsaka’s question: ‘How

lady does the attainments of the cessation of perception and feeling come about? One is **even not aware** of the fact that one is in that attainment.

‘*Na kho āvuso Visākha saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjantassa bhikkhuno evaṃ hoti ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjissanti vā ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjāmīti vā ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpannoti vā. Atha khvāssa pubbeva tathā cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ hoti yantaṃ tathattāya upaneṭṭi!*’

‘Friend Visakha, when a monk is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling it does not occur to him: I shall attain the cessation of perception and feeling or I am attaining the cessation of perception and feeling or **I have attained the cessation of perception and feeling**; but rather his mind has previously been developed in such a way that it leads him to that state.’

VI. Although *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* mentions C.P.F. as the eight *vimokkha* **it does not** equate it to the experience of *Nibbāna* as could be gleaned from a careful scrutiny of the ‘summing up of the section on “one who is liberated both ways’ (*ubhatobhāga vimutta*).

*Yato kho Ānanda bhikkhu ime aṭṭha vimokkhe anulomampi samāpajjati paṭilomampi samāpajjati anuloma-paṭilomampi samāpajjati, yatthicchakaṃ yadicchakaṃ yāvaticchakaṃ samāpajjatipi vuṭṭhātīpi āsavānañca khayā anāsavam cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭheva dhamme sayāṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati Ānanda bhikkhu **ubhatobhāgavimutto** imāya ca ānanda ubhatobhāgavimuttiyā aññā ubhatobhāgavimutti uttaritarā vā paṇītatarā vā natthi ti.*

“Ananda when once a monk attains these eight liberations in direct order in reverse order and in direct and reverse order,

entering them and emerging from them as and when, and for as long as he wishes **and has gained by his own higher knowledge here and now by the destruction of influxes both the liberation of the mind and the liberation through wisdom**, that monk is called both ways liberated and Ananda there is no other way of both ways liberation that is higher or more excellent than this.”

Note: Maurice Walshe’s translation is not accurate (p. 230 Long Discourses of the Buddha).

He has here and now **both** the destruction of the corruptions – which is incorrect. The liberation through wisdom comes after emerging from C.P.F. as we have pointed out above.

VII. Perhaps the most convincing argument against the general belief that *saññāvedayitanirodha samāpatti* itself is *Nibbāna*, is the fact that according to *Mahā parinibbāna Sutta* the Buddha passed away or attained *parinibbāna* not while he was in *Nirodha Samāpatti* but having come down from it to the fourth jhāna. It is immediately after arising from the fourth jhāna that he passed away.

(*catutthajjhānā vuṭṭhahitvā samanantarā Bhagavā parinibbāyi.*)

How easy it is to mistake *Nirodha Samāpatti* as *Nibbāna* is well illustrated by Venerable Ananda’s remark when the Buddha by stages reached the *nirodha samāpatti* on that occasion.

‘*Parinibbuto bhante Anuruddha Bhagavā*’

‘Ven Sir Anuruddha the Exalted One has attained *parinibbāna.*’

But Venerable Anuruddha corrected him with the following authoritative statement: ‘*Na āvuso Ānanda Bhagavā parinibbuto saññāvedayita nirodham samāpannoti.*’

“No friend Ananda the Exalted One has not attained *parinibbāna*, he has (only) attained to the cessation of perception and feeling.”

Appendix I

Bhaddaji Sutta A III 202

Kim nu kho āvuso Bhaddaji dassanānaṃ aggamaṃ kim savanānaṃ aggamaṃ kim sukhānaṃ aggamaṃ kim saññānaṃ aggamaṃ kim bhavānaṃ agganti.

Bhaddaji’s answer:

Atthāvuso brahmā abhibhū anabhibhūto aññādatthudaso vasavattī yo taṃ brahmānaṃ passati. idamaṃ dassanānaṃ aggamaṃ. Atthāvuso ābhassarā nāma devā sukhena abhisannā parisannā, te kadāci karahaci udānaṃ udāneti. “Aho sukhaṃ aho sukhamti” yo taṃ saddamaṃ suṇāti. idamaṃ savanānaṃ aggamaṃ. Atthāvuso subhakiṇhā nāmā devā. Te santaññeva tusitā sukhaṃ paṭisaṃ vedenti. idamaṃ sukhānaṃ aggamaṃ. Atthāvuso ākiñcaññāyatanūpagā devā. Idamaṃ saññānaṃ aggamaṃ. Atthāvuso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanūpagā devā. Idamaṃ bhavānaṃ agganti.

Ananda’s answer:

Yathā passato kho āvuso anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hoti. Idamaṃ dassanānaṃ aggamaṃ. Yathā suṇato anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hoti idamaṃ savanānaṃ aggamaṃ. Yathā sukhitassa anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hoti idamaṃ sukhānaṃ aggamaṃ. Yathā saññissa anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hoti idamaṃ saññānaṃ aggamaṃ. Yathā bhūtassa anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hoti idamaṃ bhavānaṃ agganti.

Part 2

29/09/2010

Most Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thero,

Based on *Kasi Bhāradvāja Sutta* (Sn.): Did the Buddha refuse to accept milk rice offered to him at the end of the sermon in keeping with the spirit of *Dhammadāna*?

If so how can the monks accept offerings after delivering a dhamma sermon?

Dear Upāsaka U.M.,

I shall try to answer your questions stated in the two letters dated (1) 29-09-10 and (2) 05-08-10

The Buddha refused the offering because in repudiating Kasi Bhāradvāja's insult that he does not 'plough & sow', he happened **to give an open hint** (lit. 'sing' an open hint) in verses that he is **qualified** to receive the offering as **he also 'ploughs & sows'**. It smacks of '**self-praise**' for the sake of food. That is why he rejected the offering. The Buddha's **true aim was to uphold the Dhamma** and enlighten Kasi Bhāradvāja on the true significance of virtues leading upto *Nibbāna*. That done, his purpose is fulfilled.

You may read and reflect deeply on the two verses (No. 81, 82) following his refusal. You get an even clearer instance of this '**more-than-gentlemanly**' refusal of an offering which the Buddha found it '**beneath his dignity**' to accept in *Sundarika Bhāradvāja Sutta* (*S.N. Mahāvagga* – vss 455-486).

Here we find Sundarika Bhāradvāja looking around for someone **worthy** of receiving his oblation. When he spotted the Buddha seated close by with his head covered, he approached

him to offer it. But as soon as the Buddha uncovered his head, he insulted the Buddha as a despicable shaveling and was about to go away. In the course of the long discussion that followed, Sundarika Bhāradvāja pointedly asked the Buddha to instruct him as to the fittest person to receive the oblation (see vs 461). Among the verses that the Buddha uttered in reply, in as many as 12 verses (Nos. 467, 478) the refrain runs;

‘*Tathāgato arahati pūraḷāsaṃ*’

‘Tathāgata deserves the oblation’

You can well imagine poor Sundarika Bhāradvāja’s dismay when, after all this, the Buddha **refuses** to accept the oblation with the same axiomatic verse (No. 480) as in *Kasibhāradvāja Sutta*.

What a wonderful **example** of the Buddha’s own **precept** to his monks in *Dhammadāyāda Sutta*. (M. I. 12)

‘*Dhammadāyāda me bhikkhave bhavatha mā āmisadāyādā*’

‘Monks, be inheritors to my Dhamma – not to my requisites’

Part 3

05/08/2010

Most Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thero,

There is the reference to the four lustres which includes; ‘the lustre of wisdom’ in the *Nibbāna* Sermon 7 (p. 148). Does it mean that the ‘lustre of wisdom’ is the same as a lustre of the sun, moon and the fire – dispelling darkness from the light they emanate; or is it because it (lustre of wisdom) dispels *avijjā*?.... (etc)

Dear Upāsaka U.M.,

Instead of writing a long commentary on this subject which I have discussed already in several of my books, I shall briefly indicate the limitations of the above standpoint and give references where necessary to my writings – for deeper reflection.

Granted that *paññā* dispels *avijjā*, what is *avijjā*?

In the light of *paññā* **the totality of sense percepts is tantamount to *avijjā***. The light of penetrative wisdom (*pabhassaraṃ idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ*) is not to be confused with **external** agents of light amenable to physics. (see pp 60-65 *Saṃyutta Nikāya – An Anthology*). It is an **illumination** coming from **within**, which renders nugatory the ‘made-up’ and prepared (*samkhata*) world of sense experiences. Let me quote, anyway the relevant concluding lines in the *Magic of the Mind* (p 79).

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's naught (Ud.79)

Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, ideas.
All what they deem desirable – charming, pleasing things
Of which they claim: '**it is**' as far as their claim extends
The world with its gods is agreed, that these are pleasant
things.
And wherein they surcease – 'that's unpleasant indeed'
say they.

Dvayatānupassanā Sutta. S.N.
(pls see also pp 76, 77, 82, 83)

Part 4

25.05.2007

Most Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thero,

I thought of writing this letter after reading ‘The Mind Stilled’ 5th Volume. It is with reference to *Pahārāda Sutta* quoted on page 21. Of course this sutta has been cited by many in support of their contention that *Nibbāna* is yet another state of existence even after the *parinibbāna* of an Arahant.

Now, what puzzles me is this: why did the Buddha cite the ocean as an example to drive this point? He could have remained silent as in other instances (like with reference to Vaccha’s speculative questions) as the question – *Nibbāna* in terms of a volume – would not arise. Due to the Buddha’s explanation of *Nibbāna* with reference to ‘volume’ the notion that it is a supra mundane state of existence could creep into one’s mind.

I would be grateful Venerable Sir, if you could kindly clarify this point for me in the interest of Dhamma. I am particularly interested in obtaining a clarification from you, because the same example has been used even in Bhagvad-gita, as follows: **“A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires – that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still – can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires.”** Text 70. In explaining this verse the commentators have likened it to ‘Krishna Consciousness’ which of course is the ultimate state of existence according to their teaching – union with the Godhead.

May you Ven. Sir, live long to serve the Sāsana in this hour of great need!

Yours respectfully,
U.M.

Dear Upāsaka U.M.,

I received your letter dated 25/05/2007 posing a problem arising out of the reference to ‘*Nibbāna Dhātu*’ in the *Pahārāda Sutta* in connection with its sustained simile of the ocean.

To begin with, there is a more obvious reference to the ocean as an abode for beings in the **8th simile** “*Seyyathāpi Pahārāda mahāsamuddo mahataṃ bhūtānam ’āvūso....*” etc, but the beings mentioned there are the following:

1. *Sotāpanno*
2. *Sotāpatti phala sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*
3. *Sakadāgāmi*
4. *Sakadāgāmi phala sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*
5. *Anāgāmi*
6. *Anāgāmi phala sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*
7. *Arahā*
8. *Arahattāya paṭipanno*

So it seems, if at all even figuratively, the Buddha conceived the great ocean as an **abode** of huge beings, the beings he had in mind were the 8 *Ariya Puggalas*. The Arahant who has attained *parinibbāna* and passed away **is out of the picture!**

If the ‘ocean’ **has no place** for *anupādisesā parinibbāna dhātu* how are we to understand the problematic **5th simile?** We have to remind ourselves that there are **2 *Nibbānadhātus***.

“*Dve me bhikkhave Nibbānadhāthuyo. Katamā dve? Sopādisesā ca Nibbānadhātu anupādisesā ca Nibbānadhātu....*” etc. (Itiv. P.38)

Presumably, then, what the 5th simile tries to convey is the fact that however many monks may pass away into *parinibbāna*, there is no **decrease** (sic) or **increase** in the *Nibbānadhātu* as such.

“.....*bahū cepi bhikkhū anupādisesāya parinibbāyanti, na tena Nibbānadhātuyā ūnattam (sic) vā pūrattam vā paññāyati.....*”

The insinuation is that there is no **qualitative or quantitative de-valuation in the *Nibbānadhātu*** as a result of many monks passing away into *parinibbāna* without residual clinging. Granting the fact that the Arahant (the 8th *ariyapuggala*) **is already there in the ‘ocean’**, his passing away into *parinibbāna* might even give rise to a notion of a ‘decrease’ in the ocean! So the boot is actually on the other foot!!!

It is at this point our simile of the **vortex** becomes meaningful.

“The vortex has now become the great ocean itself”
(N.M.S. v.p.447)

The cessation of suffering could therefore be compared to the cessation of the vortex leaving only the great ocean as it is (P448 *ibid*)

YES.....Leaving only the great ocean as it is. That is to say – there is neither a decrease nor an increase in the ocean.

Let us now take up the simile that you have quoted from the *Bhagavadgītā*:

“A person who is not disturbed by the **incessant flow of desires – that enter like rivers into the ocean – can alone** achieve peace and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires (text 70).”

Here it is the incessant flow of **DESIRE**S that is compared to the flow of rivers into the ocean and the moral upheld is **not to be disturbed by them**. As you know the Buddha also compared craving to rivers and streams (eg. Dh.p.vv 339, 340). Also at Itiv 114 (P.T.S.)

‘*Nadiyā sototi kho bhikkhave taṇhāyetham adhivacanam*’

‘The current of the river, monks, is a synonym for craving.’

The figure of the river or stream as used by the Buddha is less compromising than in the concept of Krishna consciousness for the Buddha speaks of a ‘drying up’ of the stream of craving.

‘*Visukkhā saritā na sandati*’ (ud. p. 75, PTS)

‘The stream dried up – flows no more’

The simile of the river in *Bhagavadgitā* does not seem to suggest a union with the Godhead: it has no ontological connotations. The ideal upheld is ‘**not to be – disturbed**’ by the incessant flow of desires – **which continue to flow in all the same !!!**

Part 5

28-11-2010

Most Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thero,

I have been puzzled over some of the *Abhidhamma* teachings. So I thought of writing to invite you to clear my doubt. My question relates to *citta vīthīs* as explained in *Abhidhamma*. Even Rerukane Hamuduruwo has said in his book on *Abhidhamma* that *citta vīthīs* cannot be seen operating; nevertheless they have to be understood. This seems to be blind acceptance which is against the ‘*sandiṭṭhika*’ and ‘*paccattam veditabba*’ quality of the Dhamma.

One can see the arising of *citta* only by means of another *citta* which has to be fully developed. But *citta vīthīs* are incapable of seeing a *citta*, because they are still in a formative stage, as components of a *citta*, which cannot on their own see and comprehend the arising of a *citta*.

Please Venerable Sir, explain this riddle for the benefit of so many who blindly follow certain teachings without the ability to fully understand them. Even a blind person will believe (even blindly) that there is the sun, moon and colours etc., because he hears about them from several others who are able to see; he could see them if he cures his blindness (like the simile in *Māgandiya Sutta*). Similarly, we believe the existence of a neutron in an atom even though we have not seen; because scientists who have seen them, through the microscope have confirmed. And if we are interested we could also see them through a microscope. One may develop one’s mind so that one could even see one’s previous existence to clear any doubt (without blindly accepting others) relating to past births. But the same would not hold water relating to *citta vīthīs*. Are we to BLINDLY accept these theories? I hope I have made myself

clear. I would be so grateful if you would kindly elucidate this matter Ven. Sir.

Yours respectfully,
U.M.

Dear Upāsaka U.M.,

I received your letter dated 28-11-2010 regarding your problems relating to the *Abhidhamma* teachings on ‘*citta*’ and ‘*citta vīthīs*’. I shall put down my comments below. The Buddha has explained for us the ‘FLUX’ within and without in his teachings on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. The flux within is well explained by the twelve – linked formula beginning with ignorance and ending with decay and death... etc. It is illustrated by the tide and the ebb of the ocean – the flux outside (see ch. VIII. The Magic of the Mind). There I have outlined the basic principle underlying the law of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* already in the opening sentences.

“The principle underlying the twelve linked formula of Dependent Arising is a law of nature that is universally applicable whether one is dealing with the animate realm or the inanimate. It presents a dynamic view of all phenomena as they arise depending on causes only to cease when these are removed” (ibid p.44).

I have also summed up this dynamic philosophy later on as follows:

“Thus the law holds good for both kinds of flux – that of water and that of psychological states. The process of tide and ebb is a tendency not only of water but of the saṃsāric individual as well. The recognition of this process ‘as-it-is’ marks a significant advance on the trends of animistic thought which,

from prehistoric times, sought to explain phenomena in terms of essence, self or soul” (ibid p.46)

Now the *Abhidhamma* schools of thought in Buddhist philosophy have failed to appreciate this dynamic approach due to their enslavement to concepts which are but static symbols that the Buddha made use of without clinging. The gist of the Buddha’s exhortation to Citta Hatthisāriputta in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (D.N.) comes as the grand finale in these words:

“For these, Citta, are merely names, expressions, terms of speech, designations in common use in the world. And of these the *Tathāgata* makes use indeed – but without clinging.”

In this particular instance the Buddha takes as an illustration the ‘flux’ of milk (i.e. milk → curd → butter → ghee → junket)

(see Concept & Reality p.87 fn.)

Being unaware of the limitations of the conceptual superstructure of language and logic *ābhidhammikas* took to elaborate analysis and synthesis of concepts in a vain attempt to understand and explain this ‘flux’.

Analysis yields a list of static concepts estranged from reality. So they were at their wits end synthesizing them avoiding the pitfalls of animistic thought. The fact that they sometimes even ran that risk is best exemplified by Venerable Buddhaghosa’s following comment on *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*.

“.....Because of that contact arises feeling with contact as its condition by way of co-nascence etc. Whatever object is felt by that feeling, that perception perceives, whatever perception perceives, reasoning reasons about that very object. Whatever reasoning reasons about, *papañca* transforms into *papañca* that very object...”

(see Concept & Reality p.8 fn)

The positing of 4 *paramattha dhammas* (*citta, cetasika, rūpa, Nibbāna*) also betrays a lack of understanding *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. The three life interpretation obscures the true significance of the **vortex (vaṭṭa)** between consciousness and name-and-form and its relevance to language and logic (see Ch V the Magic of the Mind). The deeper implication of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* pertaining to the pivotal concept (*phassa*) have been ignored. So a hierarchy of dhammas was found to be necessary to explain the behaviour of conditions (*paccaya*).

With all this confusion the *ābhidhammikas* hung onto the scaffolding of concepts forgetting its true purpose. The RAFT meant for crossing over thus came to be grasped – quite contrary to the Buddha’s advice.

By the way, I may mention here that some of those who have read ‘Concept and Reality’ confessed to me frankly that they had **wasted** many years trudging along the labyrinths of *Abhidhamma*!

With mettā,
K. Nāṇananda

Correspondence with Mr. P.M.

16/04/2015

Venerable Katukurunde Nanananda Bhikkhu
Moragolla Watta
Imbulgasdeniya – 71055
Sri Lanka.

Dear Venerable Sir,

About your comments on ‘Dependant Arising’, though I may not have specifically mentioned it, the purpose of this book was to show **logically how** the adjacent factors **connect together** – particularly in the twelve factored version of arising and cessation of suffering. My intention was to show the reader that isolating factors in groups – effectively obscuring these connections – and imposing several lives are arbitrary and contrary to the intention in the suttas (but, there are suttas that specifically indicate more than one life in a series and the intention is clear). The aspect of experiential knowledge of the Dhamma was not within the scope of this book.

If my recollection is correct, you point out in one of your sermons that, at the culmination of the *vipassanā ñāṇas*, all factors of dependent arising cease for an instant. This is so and leaves one in no doubt that the twelve factors of dependent arising **stand and cease together** invalidating the traditional three-life interpretation!

I have listened to all 20 sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* and found myself very comfortable. I very much like the sermons describing the vortical interplay of name and form and consciousness, with the illustration of the whirlpool and explanation of how it comes about.

I am re-reading your book ‘Seeing Through’. In the last four stages of *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, *vipassanā ñāṇas* seem to be only implicit: they have been usefully incorporated in this book.

Contact: An extract from *Anguttara Nikāya* VI 61 as follows:

“The six internal bases, friends, are one end, the six external bases are the second end, consciousness is in the middle, and craving is the seamstress. For the craving sews one to the production of this or that state of being.”

Contact is defined in the suttas as coming together of three components: internal-base, corresponding external base and consciousness that depends on the first two. Chapter 15 and Appendix 1 (under ‘*Citta*’) of ‘Dependent Arising’ indicate (according to my understanding) that intention and by implication, craving¹ precede contact. However, a contemplative reading of ‘Seeing Through’ has clarified additional things: particularly the discriminative function of consciousness and its implications.

Taking eye contact as an example, its definition implies coming together of three **apparently** separate – independent – components: eye (one end), form (other end) and eye consciousness (middle). This separateness is an illusion, because:

- Eye implies form (things to see) and form implies eye (as faculty): one end implies the other.
Thus, eye and form depend on each other.
- Eye consciousness depends on eye and form: middle implies two ends.
- Eye and form imply eye consciousness: two ends imply middle.

Thus, all constituents of contact are **inseparably** related. Additionally, and from another perspective, it is consciousness that enables discrimination between eye and form: their very

¹ Craving is involved in the **choice** of a particular intention with regard to the external base.

existence depends on it. Nevertheless, as if by fraud, it is included as a separate third component to somehow constitute contact: for in its absence, there is no contact. This inclusion seems quite illegitimate!

In the non-arahant, contact involves a duality and I see the ‘production of this or that state of being’², indicated in the extract above, as follows:³

- ‘I am’⁴ at the one end and external bases at the other end.
- External bases are ‘for me’⁵ (craving = seamstress).
- External bases are ‘mine’⁶ (taking-up = *upādāna*).
- Production of this or that state of being.⁷

In development of contemplation of dependent arising of the components of contact – particularly of consciousness – the supra-mundane path may be born. With this, both craving and ‘I am’ begin to wane to eventually disappear. This is cessation of being (*bhava nirodha*⁸): *Nibbāna*. This is also *phassa nirodha*. All relationships of dependence have ceased. The term ‘contact’, if used in describing the experience of an Arahant, is nominal.

² Bhava

³ This analysis is structural and not temporal.

⁴ Needs identification

⁵ Initiation of acquisition (of ‘building blocks’ to construct ‘I’)

⁶ Accomplishment of acquisition of ‘building blocks’ (implies mastery over them) and construction of an ‘I’

⁷ Identification with construct (noun) as ‘I am this or that’: includes measurement (*māna*) of ‘I am’ and comparison

⁸ Complete cessation of identification (*atammayatā*)

Venerable Sir, unless it is exhausting, can you make your particular comments on chapters 13 and 14 of ‘Dependent Arising’? However, the analysis mostly, if not entirely, follows ‘cold logic’!

With Mettā,
P.M.

22.04.2015

Dear Upāsaka P.M.,

I went through your comments on my letter. Before getting down to the question of ‘**CONTACT**’, let me clarify what I meant by ‘**logic**’, because that is basic to your understanding of what I have to say on this topic.

As you know, in logic, there is a distinction between ‘**apriori**’ (deductive) and ‘**aposteriori**’ (inductive) reasoning. Commenting on the meaning of ‘apriori’ ‘the Oxford’ Dictionary says: ‘**logically independent of experience, not derived from experience**’! Perhaps the best illustration for it comes in my discussion of the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* in P.S. Sermon No. 11 where I cited the similes given by the Buddha (i) **the beauty queen** (ii) **the staircase** – to invalidate Poṭṭhapāda’s arguments. The two peculiar terms the Buddha uses in that context, namely ‘*appāñhira*’ (undemonstrable) and ‘*sappāñhira*’ (demonstrable) are highly significant.

Though less obvious, the generally accepted concept of ‘**CONTACT**’ **takes for granted the very things** that the Buddha calls in question. I am surprised that no one drew attention to the

refrain-like phrase ‘*tadapi phassa paccayā*’ (to invalidate – **not** to prove) all the 62 views in *Brahmajāla Sutta*, until I highlighted it in my *Nibbāna* sermons. As I mentioned in my earlier letter, that is the **fine-mesh** of the super-net where all view-holders get caught. No doubt nearly all my readers have found it to be the ‘CRUX’ of what I have preached and written so far.

The extract from *Majjhe Sutta* (A III 40 P.T.S.) you have quoted has to be understood in the context of the verse which is very deep. It is the topic of my P.S. Sermon No. 09. If the two ends are **correctly** understood, one **does not – with wisdom – get attached to the middle**. Due to **ignorance** (eg’) the eye and the forms are **bifurcated** as separate – as in the case of the deer **running after the mirage (i.e. ‘water’ – the ‘object’** from its point of view. At each step the deer takes **the eye-consciousness** with it – though it is unaware of it when it chases it. So it is **quite legitimate** to include it as the ‘tertium-quid’. Consciousness is never **abstract** – it is always **concrete**. If you wish to get it clarified you may take the trouble to trace (**by the Title**) **The Heretic Sage series** in the internet where one Venerable Yogānanda who interviewed me in 2009 records our Dhamma discussion. Please read Part 5 of the series in particular which gives my interpretation of ‘*tajjo samannāhāro*’ in *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta* (M.N.) In the *Mahā Vedalla Sutta* Venerable Sāriputta draws our attention to something more basic than consciousness – namely ‘*āyu*’ & ‘*usmā*’ (life span and heat).

It is not advisable to put **the non-Arahant** and Arahant into two water-tight compartments. There is the ‘*sekha*’ whose intermediate level of understanding is highlighted in the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* with the term ‘*abhijānāti*’ (as against ‘*sañjānāti*’ of the ‘*assutavā puttujjana*’ and the cryptic phrase ‘*mā maññi*’ which has puzzled the commentator (see my explanation in *Concept & Reality* and *N.M.S.* series). The ‘*sotāpanna*’, encouraged by his **momentary experience of the cessation of consciousness**, is training towards ‘*pariññā*’

(*parijānāti* of the Arahant). It is through ‘*yoniso manasikāra*’ (the ‘seed’ of wisdom) that he has a momentary flash through the veil of ignorance and the magical illusion of consciousness. To get some idea of the depth of insight of an (authentic) *sotāpanna* you may listen to my P.K. sermon No. 209 where **even a layman and a millionaire like Anāthapindika** gets high compliments from the Buddha for his amazing insight. (I have included this sermon in Vol. 9 of Pahan Kanuwa Sermons which will be out shortly).

Regarding P.S. Sermon No. 13 you may study it side by side with my discussion of ‘*saṅkhārā*’ in Towards Calm and Insight (pp.14-28). I am sorry, with failing health in my senile seventies I cannot afford to go on ‘commenting’ at length. I am devoting most of the time to translating the 20 sermons on P.S. So far I have finished the first ten. Looking back on the past 45 years of my monk’s life, I may say, I have already presented in rough outline what I have to say in Concept and Reality. After 20 years I elaborated on it in my *Nibbāna* Sermons. After another 20 years I delivered the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* sermons which further elaborated on some extremely deep points in the Dhamma. I don’t think I will live to provide ‘commentaries’ to clarify them further. All I can do is to remind you of the **3 R’s (a new version!) ‘Reading – Reflection – Realization’**.

My best wishes for your good health and progress towards *Nibbāna*.

With mettā
K. Ñāṇananda

Bhikkhu Varapannyo

Sir,

Here in Kolatenna Hermitage, Bandarawela we have the first 5 volumes of *Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled*. If you could send us the next books when it appears, we would be very grateful.

Sir, there is one point which is interesting for me, that is why you translated *bhava* as becoming. As I understand your sermons, you see relation between questions about *Tathagata* and Dependent Arising, and you put strong emphasis on cessation of conceit ‘I am’. And then you say that *Nibbāna* is cessation of becoming. But is it so evident?

When I ask myself about myself – Am I? Am I not? – I ask about my being. When I think about *Tathāgata – Tathāgata* is or *Tathāgata* is not and so on – I think about *Tathāgata* being (word is). Heraclitus said that there is no static being, nothing ever is, that everything is becoming – so it’s clear that ‘becoming’ deals neither with ‘I am’ which is very static. (as long as there is ignorance) nor with ‘is’ in four questions about *Tathāgata*. So if Sir you are right translating *bhava* as becoming, there is some mistake in my reasoning, but in which point?

With respect
Varapannyo Bhikkhu

Dear Āyasmā Varapannyo,

I received your letter with its Dhamma question. You might be glad to hear that I have just finished translating the entire series of 33 sermons on *Nibbanā* a few days ago. I sent the tape recordings of sermons No. 32 & 33 to Ven. Anālayo (in Germany) for transcribing. Hopefully by the middle of the next year we could bring out the last two volumes of N.M.S. The seventh & last volume will include an Index for the whole series, compiled by Ven. Anālayo.

I shall explain the reason for the confusion between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’.

From Vedic times, the standard term for **being**, had been ‘**SAT**’ (see p.12 N.M.S. Vol. I) which gave rise to the Rg Vedic dilemma between **SAT** & **ASAT**. As you know, the term ‘*sattva*’ (Skt.) or ‘*satta*’ (Pali) is commonly rendered as ‘**a being**’. The Buddha rejected this false dichotomy by introducing the term *yathā-bhūta-ñāna* based on the law of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. The term is usually rendered as ‘knowledge & vision of things as-they-**are**’ but strictly speaking it means ‘knowledge & vision of things as they **have become**’. ‘The-become’ is always dependent on causes and conditions. See for instance, the long and deep dialogue in *Mahātaṇhāsamkhaya S.* (Sutta No. 38) in M.N. beginning with the brief question:

‘*Bhūtamidanti bhikkhave passatha.*’

‘Monks, do you see that this is (something) Become?’

Granted that ‘*bhūta*’ is ‘the-become’, ‘bhava’ obviously is ‘becoming’.

At this point it must be pointed out that there is an ambivalence in the meaning of the term ‘*bhava*’ commonly rendered in English as ‘existence’. For the pre-Buddhistic sages and ascetics with their stance on ‘*sat-asat*’ dichotomy, ‘*bhava*’ and ‘*vibhava*’ stood for ‘existence’ and its antonym ‘annihilation’ on ‘non-existence’. Hence the two extreme views of eternalism

and nihilism. The Buddha transcended this dichotomy by his teachings on ‘*Anattā*’. ‘*Vibhava*’ in the Buddhist context, is applicable – if at all – to ‘*sankhāras*’ – the nature of which is to ‘rise’ and ‘fall’ (‘*uppādavayadhammino*’). See my comments on the verses uttered by ven. Adhimutta Thera (p. 54ff. N.M.S. Vol. II) with special reference to the lines: *sañkhārā vibhavissanti tattha kā paridevanā*

You can easily understand why some Western scholars with the soul prejudice are taken aback by my rendering of *Nibbāna* as ‘Extinction’ – going by the fire simile. ‘*Bhavanirodha*’ is cessation of becoming, by the removal of ‘*taṇhā*’ which is qualified by the ‘pregnant’ terms ‘*ponobhavikā*’ (bringing about re-becoming – certainly not re-being!) *nandirāgasahagatā* (accompanied by delight and lust) and ‘*tatratatrābhinandinī*’ (delighting now-here-now-there). Putting an end to ‘re-becoming’ is not tantamount to ‘annihilation’ – for there is nothing to annihilate.

By the way, ‘*asmi-māna*’ is the conceit ‘AM’ (not I am) which is the most basic postulate of individual existence – the ‘peg’ from which all the ‘measurements’ start. The Buddha equated ‘AM’ to a mere conceit which has to be eradicated (*asmi māna samugghāta*) in order to attain *Nibbāna*.

As I have pointed out in my *Nibbāna* sermons the term ‘*tathāgata*’ had connotations of a ‘being’ to which he never subscribed. That is why he rejected the tetralemma in toto. The fire-simile and the whirlpool simile can sufficiently explain the Buddha’s silence on this issue.

According to the Buddha one must not ask such questions as: ‘Am I?’ or ‘Am I not?’ (see *Sabbāsava Sutta* M.N. Sutta No. 2) because they are ill-founded and lead to a thicket of speculative views. Deeper reflection on *Mahātaṇhāsamkhaya Sutta* referred to above will clear up the issue.

I do hope by the time the last two volumes of N.M.S. are out many of the difficulties in appreciating the dictum '*bhava nirodho Nibbānam*' (cessation of becoming is extinction) will disappear.

Best wishes for your progress.

With mettā

K.N.

Abhaya Himi

ප්‍රශ්නය:

ගරුකර ස්වාමීන් වහන්ස,

සමාවී වෙහෙස නොබලා කරුණාවෙන් මෙය පැහැදිලි කර දෙන්න. එනම් අප සාස්තෘන් වහන්සේ වදළ ධර්මයේ නොයෙක් තැන්වල 'මේ සිත' මනෝ - චිත්ත - විඤ්ඤුණ නාමයෙන් හඳුන්වති. මේ නම් කුන යොදා ඇත්තේ එකම ධර්මතාවයකට ද? නැතිනම් ඒ ඒ තැනට වෙන් වෙන්ව දැක්විය යුතුද?

උදහරණයක් - අංගුත්තර නිකායේ 'තික' මහා වග්ගයේ තීර්ථායතන සූත්‍රයේ ජේදයක 'මනොපච්චාරති' යනුවෙන් සිතද එම සූත්‍රයේම විඤ්ඤුණ ධාතුව වශයෙන්ද දක්වා ඇත.

සමහර අය මේ මනස - චිත්තය - විඤ්ඤුණය යන තුනම එක ධර්මතාවයක්ය කියා කියති.

මහා වේදලේ සූත්‍රයේ නම් විඤ්ඤුණ යනු (රූප ආදී අරමුණු) දැන ගන්නවා දැනගන්නවා යන ස්වභාවයට විඤ්ඤුණයයි හඳුන්වති.

ඔබවහන්සේගේ මනසේ මායාව යන පොතේ පළමුවෙනි පිටුවේද 'මායාවම උපමාවකි විනැනේ' 'මනසක මෝහනයක් ඇතිකරනේ'.

මගේ ප්‍රශ්නය තේරුම් ගැනීමට මෙය ප්‍රමාණවත් යයි සිතමි. අනුකම්පා කර මෙය විසඳ දෙන්න. ඔබවහන්සේට මේ අත්භවයේම නිවන් සුව පතමි.

මීට
අභය හිමි.

පිළිතුර:

විඤ්ඤුණ - චිත්ත - මනෝ

විඤ්ඤුණ :

වකඛු - සොත - ඝාත - ජ්වහා - කාය - මන යන ඉන්ද්‍රිය ඒවාට අදළ රූප-සද්ද-ගන්ධ-රස-ඵොට්ඨබ්බ-ධම්ම යන අරමුණු සමග පටිච්චසමුප්පන්න වශයෙන් එක්වූ කල වකඛු විඤ්ඤුණ, සොත විඤ්ඤුණ, ඝාත විඤ්ඤුණ, ජ්වහා විඤ්ඤුණ, කාය විඤ්ඤුණ, මනෝ

විඤ්ඤාණ උපදී. එහිලා 'තජ්ජා සමනනාහාරො' නම්වූ අවස්ථානුකූල යොමුවීම අත්‍යවශ්‍ය බව මහා හත්ථිපදෙපම සූත්‍රයෙන් පැහැදිලි වේ.

“අනෙක පරියායෙන හි වො භික්ඛවෙ පටිච්චසමුප්පනනං විඤ්ඤාණං චූතනං මයා අඤ්ඤාත්‍ර පච්චයා නත්ථි විඤ්ඤාණසස සමභවොති” (මහා තණ්හාසංඛය සූත්‍රය - ම.නි.) පාඨයෙන් විඤ්ඤාණයෙහි පටිච්චසමුප්පනන බව අවධාරණය කැරෙයි. ගින්නක් ඊට ප්‍රත්‍යය වනදේ ඇසුරෙන් හඳුන්වන්නාක් මෙන් විඤ්ඤාණයද ඊට අදාළ ප්‍රත්‍යයන් අනුව හැදින්වෙන බවද ඒ සූත්‍රයෙන්ම පැහැදිලි වේ. ('නිකං ගින්නක්' නැත්නාක් මෙන් 'නිකං විඤ්ඤාණයක්ද' නැත).

විඤ්ඤාණයෙහි කෘත්‍යය වෙන්කර දැනගැනීමමය. ඇසත් රූපයත් වෙන්කර දැනගන්නේ වකඛු විඤ්ඤාණය පහළවූ විටය. ඇසත් රූපයත් නිසා හටගත් විඤ්ඤාණය තුළ ඇති 'මායාව' ඒ දෙක පරතරයක් සහිත දෙකක් හැටියට 'වෙන් - කර' දැන ගැනීමමය. එනම් 'නිසා හටගත් බව' අමතක කිරීමය (අවිද්‍යාව). මෙසේ වැරදි ලෙස වෙන්කරගත් ඇසත් රූපයත් අතර 'ගැටීමක්' ප්‍රකල්පනය කිරීමෙන් එසස යන අවස්ථාවත් (එසස පඤ්ඤාති) වෙදනා, සඤ්ඤා ආදී වශයෙන් මිරිඟුවක් ඔස්සේ දිවීමත් ඇතිවේ.

චිත්ත :

සඤ්ඤා, වෙදනා චිත්ත සංස්කාර වශයෙන් හඳුන්වා තිබීමෙන් පෙනෙන්නේ 'සිත' සකස්වන්නේ සඤ්ඤා, වෙදනා තුළින් බවය. සිතෙහි 'විචිත්‍රතවයට' හේතුව 'හැඟීම් වලින්' එය පෝෂණය වීමය. සතිපට්ඨාන සූත්‍රයෙහි 'සරාගං චිත්තං' 'සදෙසං චිත්තං' ආදී වශයෙන් දැක්වෙන්නේද එහෙයිනි. විඤ්ඤාණයෙන් මතු වූ අවිද්‍යාව ලෝභ, දෝස, මෝහ අනුව වඩාත් ප්‍රකටව මතුවන අවස්ථාව හැදින්වීමට 'චිත්ත' යන්න යෙදී ඇති බව පෙනේ.

මනො :

ඇස් කන් නාසාදි බාහිර ඉන්ද්‍රිය පහෙන් ගෙන එන අරමුණු භුක්තිවිඳින මනින්ද්‍රියට අරමුණ 'ධමම' හෙවත් 'දෙයයි'. චේතනා වශයෙන් කර්ම රැස් කිරීමට මූලික වන්නේද මනසයි.

මනො පුබ්බච්චගමා ධමමා
මනො සෙට්ඨා මනොමයා

පොදුවේ 'සිත' හැදින්වීමට 'චිත්ත, මනො, විඤ්ඤාණ යන වචන යෙදෙන්නේ ඉහත විචරණය අනුව මේ පද තුනේ සියුම් අර්ථ හේදයක් දැක්විය හැකිය.

විකල්ප : ඉන්ද්‍රියයන් අරමුණත් 'වෙන්කර' හඳුනාගැනීමේ අවස්ථාව.

විතත : ලෝභ, දෝෂ, මෝහ අනුව සිත හැඟීම් වලින් විවිච්චු අවස්ථාව.

මනෝ : වගකීමකින් යුක්තව කම් රැස් කෙරෙන පරිදි ක්‍රියාත්මක වන අවස්ථාව.

Dhamma Vipula Himi

ගෞරවණීය ස්වාමීන් වහන්ස,

මේ ලිපිය ලියන මා පසුගිය සතියේ (02) ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ හමුවීමට පැමිණි නිස්සරණ වනයේ ධම්මවිපුල හිමි නමයි. එදින කළා වූ සාකච්ඡාවේදීද පසුව මතු වූ ගැටළු කිහිපයක්ද ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ හමුවේ තැබීම මේ ලිපියේ අරමුණයි. ඒ සඳහා මට අවසරයි.

1. එදින කළ සාකච්ඡාවේදී මා හට වැටහී ගියේ අප්පමාන වේතොවිමුක්ති (සතර බ්‍රහ්ම විහරණ) යනු ධ්‍යාන වලට වඩා උත්තරීතර තත්ත්වයක් බවයි. නමුත් අනුරුද්ධ රහතන් වහන්සේ ගිහි පින්වතකුට වරක් පැහැදිලි කරන්නේ එසේ බවුත් වඩන යෝගියා අප්පමානාහා ආදී දෙවියන් අතර උපත ලබන බවයි. නමුත් මේ දෙවැනි හා තුන්වැනි ධ්‍යාන වලට අනුරූප වූ සමාධි මට්ටමකි. එසේම ගණක මොග්ගල්ලාන, දන්තභූමි ආදී සූත්‍ර වල අනුපද පිලිවෙත විස්තර කරන විට සඳහන් වන්නේ 1 සිට 8 වන ධ්‍යාන දක්වා විස්තර පමණි. එසේ නම් බ්‍රහ්ම විහරණ වැඩිමෙන්ද ලැබෙන්නේ ධ්‍යාන මට්ටම් මද? එසේ නම් ආනන්ද තෙරුන් වහන්සේ නිවනට දෙරටු 11 ක් ඉදිරිපත් කරන විට ඒ සතර ධ්‍යාන වලින් වෙන් කොට දැක්වූයේ ඇයි?
2. අනිමිත සමාධිය යනු කුමක්ද? හතපීසාරිපුත්ත සූත්‍රයේ (අං.නි.) මහා කොටසින් ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ සතර ධ්‍යාන වලින් වෙන්ව කෙනෙකු අනිමිත සමාධියෙන්ද පිරිහිය හැකි බව ප්‍රකාශ කරති. මට තේරුම් ගියේ මෙයින් අදහස් කරනුයේ සතර අරූප ධ්‍යාන බවයි. හේතුව ඊට රූප නිමිති නොගන්නා නිසයි. මා නිවැරදිද? එසේ නම් අනිමිත සමාධිය හා අනිමිත (අප්පණ්ණිත, සුඤ්ඤන) ආදී කොට ඇති නිවනට පිවිසෙන පිවිසුම් අතර සම්බන්ධයක් ඇද්ද?
3. ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ විසින් රචිත Samyutta Nikāya An Anthology හි 55 පිට යටම වේතොවිමුක්තිය කාය වේදනාවලින් බේරීමට බවත්, පඤ්ඤාවිමුක්තිය සැබෑ මිදීම, නිවන බවත් අදහස් වේ. මා තේරුම් ගෙන සිටියේ මේ දෙකම නිවන් අවබෝධ කිරීමක් ලෙසයි. දෙස්තරලා දෙදෙනෙකුගෙන් කෙනෙක් හෘද විශේෂඥයෙක්ද අනෙකා ස්නායු විශේෂඥයෙක්ද විය හැකි නමුත් දෙදෙනාම දෙස්තරලා වන සේ මේ දෙනම නිවනට පැමිණ ඇති බවයි. එසේම මා අසා තිබුණේ සැරියුත් තෙරුන්වහන්සේ පඤ්ඤාවිමුක්තියත්, මුගලන් තෙරුන්වහන්සේ වේතොවිමුක්තියත් මුල් කොට නිවන්

අවබෝධ කල බවකි. මේ ඇති පරස්පර තාවය කෙසේ විසඳ ගත යුතුද?

ගෞරවනීය ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේට වේලාවක් ඇත්නම් මාගේ මේ ගැටළු නිරාකරණය කර දෙන සේකවා. කරදරයක් සිදු වූවා නම් හෝ යම් වැරද්දක් සිදුවූනි නම් මා හට සමාව දෙන සේකවා.

උ. ධම්මවිපුල හිමි
නිස්සරණ වනය, මීතිරිගල

පිළිතුර

2009-07-21

1. 'වෙතොවිමුතති' පිළිබඳ ප්‍රශ්නයට අදළ ඇතැම් කරුණු පැහැදිලි කරගැනීමට මහාවෙදලල සූත්‍රය උපකාරීවේ.

එහි අවසාන කොටස්වල සඳහන් අදුකඛමසුඛ වෙතොවිමුතති සහ අනිමිත්ත වෙතොවිමුතති වලට සමවැදීම (සමාපතති) රැඳී සිටීම (ධීති) සහ නැගීසිටීම (වුට්ඨානය) ගැන කියවා බලන්න. එසේම එහි දක්වෙන අප්පමාණා වෙතොවිමුතති, ආකිඤ්චඤාඤා වෙතොවිමුතති, සුඤ්ඤාතා වෙතොවිමුතති පිළිබඳ නානාථී (නානට්ඨා) එකථී (එකට්ඨා) ප්‍රභේදය අසා ඇති ප්‍රශ්නවලට බෙහෙවින් අදළය. අකුප්පා වෙතොවිමුතතිය ඒහැම වෙතොවිමුතති අතරින් අග්‍රබව කියා ඇත.

2. අනිමිත්ත සමාධිය අථී දෙකකින් ගත යුතු බව සැලකිය යුතුවේ. අනිමිත්ත විමොක්ඛය වඩා ගැඹුරු අථී දැනවයි. පිරිහිය හැක්කේ 'නොගැඹුරු' අනිමිත්ත සමාධියෙනි.

ධ්‍යානවලට වඩා බ්‍රහ්මචිහාර වෙතොවිමුතති වෙනස්වන්නේ දිසාචරණය එහි ලක්ෂණයක් වන බැවිනි. අට්ඨකනාගර සූත්‍රයේ අමා දෙරටු අතර වෙතොවිමුතති විශේෂයෙන් දක්වා ඇත්තේ ධ්‍යාන මෙන්ම එකී වෙතොවිමුතතිද 'සංඛත' බව විදේශිතාවශයෙන් මෙනෙහිකර නිවනට ළංවිය හැකිබැවිනි.

මෙතනානිසංස සූත්‍රයේ අනුසස් 11 ක් දක්වා ඇත්තේ 'ආසේවිත, භාවිත, බහුලිකත, යානිකත, වතථුකත, අනුට්ඨිත, පරිචිත මෙතනා වෙතොවිමුතතියෙහි මිස මෙමත්‍රිභාවනාවෙන් ලබන ධ්‍යානයෙන් නොවේ. එක පුද්ගලයකු අරමුණු කර වඩනා මෙමත්‍රි ධ්‍යානයන් අප්‍රමාණ ලෙස වඩන වෙතොවිමුතතියන් අතර ගුණාත්මක වෙනස වටහා ගැනීමට ඉතිවුත්තක එක නිපාතයේ අවසාන සූත්‍රය වුව ප්‍රමාණවත්ය.

'අනාසව වෙතොවිමුතති පඤ්ඤාවිමුතති' යනුවෙන් දක්වන විමුතති දෙක අර්හත්ඵල සමාධිය සහ අර්හත්ඵල ප්‍රඥාවයි. අර්හත්ඵල සමාධිය (සළායතන නිරොධ, භව නිරොධ) මුළුමනින්ම වේදනාව තුරන්කළ (අවෙදයිත) නිරුපධි, අනුපාදිසෙස නිබ්බාන ධාතුචය. අර්හත්ඵල ප්‍රඥාව මනාප අමනාප, සුබදුකඛ' වින්දන සහිත සඋපාදිසෙස තත්ත්වයයි. ප්‍රඥාබලයෙන් වේදනා වලින් සිත රැක ගනියි, ඉතිවුත්තකයේ 'නිබ්බානධාතු දෙක පිළිබඳ විස්තරය බලන්න. (නිවන දෙසුම්වල මා කළ විවරණයද කියවා බලන්න).

Mr. Upul

2009-12-17

‘තෙරුවන් සරණයි’
පින්වත් උපුල් මහත්මයා වෙත මෙතීන්,

‘නමට රුවක් - රුවට නමක්’

‘නමට රුවක් - රුවට නමක්’ පොතේ පිටපතක් අප වෙත පුදකිරීම ගැන පින්දෙමු. මෙම අගනා දෙසුම් එකතුව තුළින් දුර්ලභ ගණයේ පුළුල් ජීවිත පරිඥනයක්, සියුම් සංවේදී බවක්, හා ගැඹුරු ජීවිත දැනියක් දුටු බව සඳහන් කරන්නේ මුදිතාවෙනි. දෙසුම් ‘පෙළ-ගැස්ම’ද පාඨකයා ක්‍රමයෙන් ගැඹුරු අවබෝධයක් කරා ගෙනයන අන්දමට සැකසී ඇති බව පෙනේ.

එද අප හමුවූ අවස්ථාවේදී මා කී පරිදි සිද්ධාන්තමය වශයෙන් නැවත සලකා බැලිය යුතුයයි හැඟෙන තැන් කිහිපයක් වෙත ඔබේ අවධානය යොමු කරවනු කැමැත්තෙමි. අත්පිටපත මුද්‍රණයට යැවීමේදී සිදුවී ඇතැයි සිතිය හැකි ඡේද අවුල (111 - 115 පිට අතර) මිලග මුද්‍රණයේදී නිවැරදි කෙරෙනු ඇතැයි සිතමි.

1. 2 පිටුව ‘චිත්තක විවාර’

ප්‍රථම ධ්‍යානයේ අංග හැටියට ‘චිත්තක විවාර’ සඳහන් වන්නේ ‘කල්පනා කිරීම හා විමසීම’ යන අර්ථයෙන් නොව ‘සමාධි නිමිත්තට සිත යෙදීම හා එහි පැවතීම’ යන අරුතෙනි. ප්‍රථමධ්‍යානය තුළ සිත පැවැත්වීමට ඒ අංග දෙක අවශ්‍ය නමුත්, ඒවා ඔළාරික නිසා, ගැඹුරු ඒකාග්‍රතාවක් හා උපේක්ෂාවක් ඇති වතුථිධ්‍යානය කරා පියමන් කිරීමේදී ඒ අංග සන්සිඳුවනු ලබයි.

සිත දෙස සතියෙන් බලාසිටීම පමණක්ම ප්‍රමාණවත් නොවන බැවින් විදැනීමට පාදක කරගැනීම සඳහා ශක්තිමත් සමාධි පදනමක් මතුකරදෙන ධ්‍යාන වැඩිමෙහි වැදගත්කම සූත්‍ර දේශනාවල නිතර අවධාරණය කැරෙයි.

2. 14 පිටුව.....‘ආසී තුෂණිමභාවය’

ආසී තුෂණිමභාවයේ උපරිම මට්ටම ‘අචිත්තක සමාධි’ නම්වූ අරහත්ඵල සමාධියයි. සළායතන නිරෝධ තත්ත්වයයි. නියම නිහඬබව එයයි.

3. 36-48 පිටු: 'ඒකාග්‍රතාව'

ඉහත කී ධ්‍යාන තත්ව උදෙසා කිසියම් සමාධි නිමිත්තක් ඇසුරු කරමින් වැඩිදියුණු කරගතයුතුයයි ('ආසේවනා, භාවනා, බහුලිකමම') බුදුරදුන් වදළ බව පැහැදිලිය. සංවර - පහාන - භාවනා - අනුරකඛණ යන සතරාකාර විධිය හඳුන්වන තැන 'අනුරකඛණ' නම්වූ 'රැකගැනීම' හඳුන්වාදී ඇත්තේ හටගත් කිසියම් සමාධි නිමිත්තක් ගිලිහී යා නොදී රැකගැනීමේ විධිය වශයෙනි.

'සමථ' - 'විපසසනා' යනු ශික්ෂණ දෙකක්ම බවත් ඒවා එකිනෙකට උපකාර වන අන්දමින් වැඩිය යුතු බවත් දක්වා ඇත.

- i. සමථය පෙරටුකරගත් විපසසනාව
- ii. විපසසනාව පෙරටුකරගත් සමථය
- iii. සමථ-විපසසනා දෙක යුගනදධ වශයෙන් වැඩීම

මේ සම්බන්ධයෙන් මෑතදී මා පැවැත්වූ පහන්කණුව දෙසුමක් (CD අංක 157) මේ සමග ඇත. මැදුම් මග කුළ ඇති ප්‍රායෝගික-සාපේක්ෂක ලක්ෂණ වටහා නොගත් ඇතැම් දැඩිකයෝ ධ්‍යාන වෙනුවෙන් විධි වැඩීම මමතවය තහවුරු කරන්නක් (self-affirmation) ලෙස වරදවා ගනිති. ඒවා 'සංඛත' නමුත් විද්ධිතාව කුළුගන්වා ගැනීමට ඒවා උපකාර කරගත හැකිය. ප්‍රායෝගික-සාපේක්ෂක මූලධර්ම පිළිබඳව අලගදූපම රචනික ආදී සුත්‍ර ඇසුරෙන් 'නිවනේ නිවීම' දෙසුම් පෙළෙහිදී එක්තරා විග්‍රහයක් කළෙමි. (නි. නි. 649-653, 671, 680-686, 695, 696, 702 පිටු)

සම්බෝධිය ලැබීමෙන් පසු පළමුවෙන්ම ධර්මය දෙසිය යුත්තේ කවරෙකුටදැයි සළකා බැලීමේදී ඉහළ අරුප ධ්‍යාන ලබා සිටි ආලාරකාලාම උද්දකරාම පුත්ත තවුසන් දෙදෙන බුදුරදුනට පෙනීගියේ වහා ධර්මය අවබෝධ කරගැනීමට ඔවුන් සමත් වෙතැයි වැටහුන බැවිනි.

4. 94-106 පිටු 'මෙමතියේ උල්පත* ඔබයි'

*උල්පත: උල්පතකින් දිය ගලන්නේ ඇතුළතට නොව පිටතටය.

බුද්ධ දේශනාවේ නොමැති 'තමාට මෙමතියි' අටුවා යුගයේදී මුල්බැසගෙන ඇතිබව පෙනේ. අද මෙමතී භාවනාවේ මුල් පියවර හැටියට හැම තැනකම ඉගැන්වෙන්නේ තමාට මෙමතී කරගැනීමයි. සුත්‍ර ගත බුද්ධ දේශනාවට අනුව නම් මෙමතී භාවනාවේදී

තමා ගැන සිතිය යුත්තේ තමා සැපයට කැමතිබවත් දුකට අකැමැතිබවත් ('තමා උපමා කොට') සාක්ෂිස්ථානයේ තබාගෙන අනුන්ගේ සැප කැමති - දුකට අකැමැති බව සිතට කාවද්ද ගැනීම සඳහා පමණි. මෙමත්‍රී-කරුණා-මුදිතා වැනි බ්‍රහ්මචිහරණ හුදෙක් තමාගෙන් බැහැරට යොමුකළයුතු, විහිදුවියයුතු, වින්තාකල්පය. තමාට මෙමත්‍රී කරගැනීම, තමාට ආගන්තුක සත්කාර කරගැනීම වැනි ක්‍රමවිරෝධී අදහසකි.

කලකට ඉහත ඉංග්‍රීසි පොතක කියවූ කවියක් සිහියට නැගෙයි.

I invited a party to tea
Guests there were but three
'I', 'Myself' and 'Me'
'I' passed round the cakes to 'Me'
While 'Myself' made the tea

'මාතායථා නියං පුතනං - ආයුසා එකපුතනමනුරකෙඛ
එවමපි සබ්බභුතෙසු - මානසං භාවයෙ අපරිමාණං'

කවුරුත් දන්නා මෙම සිද්ධාන්තයට අනුව, තම එකම පුතු දිවිපුදු රැකගන්නා මවක් මෙන් හැම සතුන් වෙත මෙන්සිත අප්‍රමාණ ලෙස වැඩිය යුතුවේ. තමාට මෙමත්‍රී කිරීමේ 'මූලධර්මයට' අනුව නම් ඒ මව තමාට කිසි මෙමත්‍රීයක්, කරුණාවක් නැති තැනැත්තියකි! දුගියකුගේ කුසගිනි වේදනාව තමා තුළින් වටහා ගෙන තම ආහාර වේල ඔහුට පරිත්‍යාග කරන පින්වතකු තමාට මෙමත්‍රී-කරුණා නැති කෙනෙකි!! මෙකල ලේ දන්දෙන, වකුගඩු දන්දෙන අය තම 'සිරුරට' මෙමත්‍රී-කරුණා නොදක්වන අයයි!!! මෙහිදී කුසලාකුසල විග්‍රහය සහ මෙතනානිසංස සිහියට නගාගත යුතුවේ.

තමා-හිතවතා-මැදහතා-අහිතවතා යන සතරාකාර විග්‍රහයක් ඔස්සේ මෙමත්‍රී භාවනාව දියුණු කරගත යුතු බවක් අටුවා පවසන නමුදු මෙමත්‍රී භාවනාවේ 'අත්පොත' වැනි මෙතනසුත්‍රයේ දැක්වෙන්නේ තමා කේන්ද්‍රකොටගත් 'අතනනොමතික' විග්‍රහයක් නොව විශ්ව සාධාරණ, විශ්ව ව්‍යාපී පඤ්චවිධ විග්‍රහයකි. එය කෙටියෙන් දක්වතොත් මෙසේය:

- i. තැනිගත්-තැනිනොගත්
- ii. ලොකු-කුඩා
- iii. දුටු-නුදුටු
- iv. දුර-නුදුර
- v. උපන්-නූපන්

යටකී අටුවාගත සතරාකාර විග්‍රහය සනාථ කිරීමට 'සීමා සම්පේදය' කළ අවස්ථාවට නිදර්ශනයක් වශයෙන් දක්වා ඇති කථා පුවත (101 පිටුව) සත්‍ය සිද්ධියකට වඩා ප්‍රබන්ධයක (ගෙතු කතාවක) ස්වරූපය දරයි.

බෝධිසත්තව චරිතය තුළත්, මහාකාරුණික බුදු රජාණන් වහන්සේගේ චරිතය තුළත් දැකිය හැකි පරිහිතකාමී ආත්ම පරිත්‍යාගය - අනුන් වෙනුවෙන් දුක් ගැනීම - කෙසේ අගය කළයුතුද? තමාට මෙෙත්‍රිය, දයාව, කරුණාව දැක්වීම් වශයෙන් කය සිතෙන් වෙන්කර ගැනීම නාමරූප විග්‍රහය හා සැසඳෙන බවක්ද නොපෙනේ. 'දුකෙන්ම සැප ලබාගත හැකිය' යන අන්තරාමී දෘෂ්ටිකෝණයට අනුව කෙරෙන අත්‍යකිලමථානුයෝගය බුදුරදුන් අනුමත නොකළ නමුදු 'සරත් සමයේ හටගත් කුමුදු මලක් සිදු ලන්තාක් මෙන් ආත්ම ස්නේහය සිදු දූමිය යුතු යයිද වදළහ. (ධ. ප. මග්ගවග්ග ගා.285)

හවතෘෂ්ණාවට නැඹුරුවූ හිනදු යෝගීන් මිනිස් සිරුර ආශ්වසීවත් ඊශ්වර නිමාණයක් ලෙස සලකන අතර, බුදුදහමේ විරාගී චිත්තනයට අනුව රෝගපීඩා දුක්කම්කටොලු ආදීනව පිරි මේ සිරුර 'මාරයාගේ' නිමාණයක් වැනිය. එබැවින් නිස්සාරවූ මේ සිරුරෙන් ගතහැකි 'සාරය' විමුක්ති සාරයයි. නිවනයයි.

මෙකල බොහෝ දේශකයන් දුකට සත්‍යය 'ආතතියට' සීමා කරන බව අසන්ට ලැබේ. එසේ නම් මාගී සත්‍යය වශයෙන් 'ආතති කළමනාකරණය' වුව සැහේ. බුද්ධ කාලයේ 'අනමතග' සූත්‍ර දේශනාව අසා රහත්බව පවා ලැබුවේ සංසාර භය හා සංවේගය විමුක්තියට උපකාර වන බැවිනි. අසමසම වෙදුරු තුමන්ගේ නවගුණ පාඨයෙන් ප්‍රකටවන 'විශේෂඥ' උපාධි මාලාව කෙරෙහි අවල ශ්‍රද්ධාවක් ඇතිව සිටි ඔවුන් තාවකාලික නිර්වින්දන වලින් සැහීමකට පත් නොවී 'ඒකාන්ත නිර්වේදය' තුළින් සංසාර රෝගය සදහන්ම නිවාරණය කරගත් බව පෙනේ. ('භාවනා යොමුව' CD තැටියේ අංක 149 පළමු දෙසුම මෙෙත්‍රී වේතොවිමුක්තිය පිළිබඳවය).

5. 210 පිටුව..... නාමරූප විග්‍රහය

බුදුරදුන් මෙන්ම සැරියුත් මාහිමියන්ද 'නාමරූප' හඳුන්වාදීමේදී 1. වේදනා 2. සඤ්ඤා 3. චේතනා 4. එසස 5. මනසිකාර යන අනුපිලිවෙල අනුව නාමධර්ම දක්වා තිබීම සැලකිය යුතුවේ. 'තකානුකුලව' එසසය මුලට ආයුතු නමුත් මෙහිදී වේදනාව මුලින්ලා ගැණෙනුයේ 'රූප' හඳුනාගැනීමට වේදනාව පුරෝගාමී වන බැවිනි. විඤ්ඤාණය අවදිවන්නේ වේදනාවෙනි. (මේ සම්බන්ධයෙන් 'හිතක මහිම - 2 පොතේ 25 පිටුවේ එන 'ඇඟිලි පහ' රචනය බලන්න).

'නමට රුවක් - රුවට නමක්' පොත පිළිබඳව සසුන් දයාවෙන් කළ මේ ගුණ-දෙස් දැක්වීම ඔබේ ඉදිරි සසුන් මෙහෙයට දීර්යක්ම වේවා! උතුම් තෙරුවන් ගුණ බෙලෙන් නිරෝගිසුව, ධර්මය සැනසුම සැලසේවා!

මෙයට,
සසුන් ලැදි
ක. ඤාණනන්ද

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කතු හිමියන්ගේ සිංහල කෘති

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

- සම්පාදක

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30. භාවනා මාගීය
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 36. නිවනේ නිවීම - පළමු වෙළුම
 37. නිවනේ නිවීම - දෙවන වෙළුම
 38. නිවනේ නිවීම - තෙවන වෙළුම
 39. නිවනේ නිවීම - සිවුවන වෙළුම
 40. නිවනේ නිවීම - පස්වන වෙළුම
 41. නිවනේ නිවීම - සයවන වෙළුම
 42. නිවනේ නිවීම - සත්වන වෙළුම
 43. නිවනේ නිවීම - අටවන වෙළුම
 44. නිවනේ නිවීම - නවවන වෙළුම
 45. නිවනේ නිවීම - දසවන වෙළුම
 46. නිවනේ නිවීම - එකොළොස්වන වෙළුම
 47. නිවනේ නිවීම - පුස්තකාල මුද්‍රණය (1-11 වෙළුම්)
 48. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 1 වෙළුම
 49. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 2 වෙළුම
 50. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 3 වෙළුම
 51. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 4 වෙළුම
 52. මනසේ මායාව
 53. පැරණි බෞද්ධ චින්තාවේ සංකල්පය සහ යථාථය
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නැවත මුද්‍රණය කරවීම පිළිබඳ විමසීම්
 කටුකුරුන්දේ ඤාණනන්ද සඳහම් සෙනසුන
 කිරිඳිවෙලවත්ත, දම්මුල්ල, කරඳන

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