

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

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

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

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

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

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

What the Buddha wants to convey to us by this comparison of the five grasping groups to an artefact done by a painter, is the insubstantiality and the vanity of those five groups. It brings out their compound and made-up nature. This essencelessness and emptiness is more clearly expressed in the *Pheṇapiṇḍūpamasutta* of the

*Khandhasaṃyutta*. The summary verse at the end of that discourse would suffice for the present:

*Phenaṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ,  
vedanā bubbulūpamā,  
marīcikūpamā saññā,  
saṅkhārā kadalūpamā,  
māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ,  
dīpitādiccabandhunā.<sup>5</sup>*

It says that the Buddha, the kinsman of the sun, has compared form to a mass of foam, feeling to a water bubble, perception to a mirage, preparations to a banana trunk, and consciousness to a magic show. These five similes bring out the insubstantiality of the five grasping groups. Their simulating and deceptive nature is indicated by the similes. Not only the magic show, but even the other similes, like the mass of foam, are suggestive of simulation, in giving a false notion of compactness. They all convey the idea of insubstantiality and deceptiveness. Consciousness in particular, is described in that context as a conjurer's trick.

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

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

in an audience. Similarly, the apparent reality of the animate and inanimate objects in the world, creates delusion in the worldlings.

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

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

*Kiñca, bhikkhave, saṅkhāre vadetha? Saṅkhatam abhisankharontī'ti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā 'saṅkhārā'ti vuccanti. Kiñca saṅkhatam abhisankharonti? Rūpaṃ rūpattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti, vedanaṃ vedanattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti, saññaṃ saññattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti, saṅkhāre saṅkhārattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti, viññāṇaṃ viññāṇattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti. Saṅkhatam abhisankharontī'ti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā 'saṅkhārā'ti vuccanti.*<sup>7</sup>

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

This explains why *saṅkhāras* are so called. That is to say, the sense in which they are called *saṅkhāras*. They prepare the prepared, *saṅkhata*, into that state. And the prepared is form, feeling, percep-

tion, preparations, and consciousness. *Saṅkhāras* are therefore instrumental in building up each of these grasping groups. The most intriguing statement is that even the *saṅkhāras* are built up by *saṅkhāras*. They play the part of preparing a sort of make-believe activity. In this sense it is associated with the idea of intention, as being produced by intention.

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

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

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

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

*Kāye vā, bhikkhave, sati kāyasañcetanāhetu uppañjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Vācāya vā, bhikkhave, sati vācīsañcetanāhetu uppañjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Mane vā, bhikkhave, sati manosañcetanāhetu uppañjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ avijjāpaccayā va.*

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

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

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

Let us now take up the second part:

*Sāmaṃ vā taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkharoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ. Pare vāssa taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkharonti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ. Sampajāno vā taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkharoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ. Asampajāno vā taṃ, bhikkhave, kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkharoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ.*

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

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

The third and final section is the most significant:

*Imesu, bhikkhave, dhammesu avijjā anupatitā. Avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ, sā vācā na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ, so mano na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ, khettaṃ taṃ na hoti, vatthum taṃ na hoti, āyatanam taṃ na hoti, adhikaraṇam taṃ na hoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ.*

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

there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure or pain."

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

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

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

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

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

If we try to understand its message in relation to the analogy of the film show and the drama, mentioned earlier, we may offer the following explanation: Now in the case of a film show or a drama,

the preparations remain as preparations so long as there is that darkness of ignorance. The realism or the realistic appearance of the acting of actors and actresses, or the roles and guises they assume in dress and speech, depends on the veil of ignorance that conceals their true nature.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

way we can understand how these basic forms of activity decide the criterion for judging whether life is present or extinct in a person.

That activity is something internal. But even at that level, defilements lie dormant, because ignorance is hiding there too. In fact, that is precisely why they are reckoned as *saṅkhāra*. Usually, one thinks in terms of 'I' and 'mine', as: "I breathe", "I speak", "I see", and "I feel". So, like the submerged portion of an iceberg, these subtler layers of preparations also have ignorance hidden within them. That is why the attempt of pre-Buddhistic ascetics to solve this *saṃsāric* riddle by tranquillity alone met with failure.

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

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

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

They understood to some extent that this perception is a disease, a trouble, a tumour, or a wound, or else a thorn, they wanted to be free from perception. But then, on the other hand, they feared that to be totally free from perception is to be in a deluded state. Therefore they concluded: 'This is peaceful, this is excellent, that is neither-percep-

tion-nor-non-perception’, and came to a halt there. That is why the Buddha rejected even *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* and went in search of the stilling of all preparations.

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

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

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

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

So that sign has to leave together with the desire, for the Desireless Deliverance to come about. Then one has to see all this as essenceless and void. It is just because of desire that we regard something as ‘essence-tial’. We ask for the purpose of something, when

we have desire. Now it is through this unique vision of the Signless, the Desireless, and the Void, that the Buddha arrived at the state of stilling of all preparations.

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

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

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

Now if one can get the opportunity to see either a rehearsal or the back-stage preparations for a drama, which however is not usually accessible to the public, one would be able to see through the drama. If one can steal a peep into the back-stage make-up contrivances of actors and actresses, one would see how ugly persons can become comely and the wretched can appear regal. One would then see what a 'poor show' it is.

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

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

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

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

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

What really has happened? How did they see a film show? Just as much as one creates a name-and-form on one's screen of conscious-

ness with the help of preparations, the film-goer has created a story by putting together the series of scenes falling on the screen.

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

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

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

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

Then comes the term *tatratatrābhinandi*, the nature of delighting, in particular now here, now there. It is, in effect, the association of one scene with another in order to make up a story out of it. That is why we made the statement: 'So far not a single cinema has held a film show and not a single theatre has staged a drama'.<sup>24</sup> But all the

same, those who went to the cinema and the theatre witnessed a show and a drama. How? They produced them, or prepared them, with their 'sticky' defilements on their own.

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

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

*Anattani attamāṇiṃ,  
passa lokam sadevakam,  
niviṭṭham nāmarūpasmim,  
idaṃ saccan'ti maññati.*<sup>26</sup>

"Just see the world, with all its gods,  
Fancying a self where none exists,  
Entrenched in name-and-form it holds  
The conceit that this is real."

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

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



So it either wags its tail in a friendly way, or growls angrily, or else it keeps on stealing glances out of curiosity - love, hate, and delusion.

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

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

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

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

The word *paṭicca* has a very deep meaning. The Buddha borrowed many words from the existing philosophical tradition in India. Sometimes he infused new meanings into them and adopted them to his terminology. But the term *paṭicca samuppāda* is not to be found in any other philosophical system. The special significance of the term lies in the word *paṭicca*.

On a certain occasion, the Buddha himself gave a definition to this term *paṭicca samuppāda*. Now it is fairly well known that the

Buddha declared that all this suffering is dependently arisen. What then is to be understood by the word *dukkha*, or ‘suffering’? He defines it in terms of the five grasping groups, or the five aggregates of clinging, as it is said: *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*,<sup>27</sup> "in short, the five grasping groups are suffering". So then suffering, or the five grasping groups, is something dependently arisen.

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

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

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

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

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

*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ,*

*anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,  
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati,  
ettha dīghañca rassañca,  
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,  
ettha nāmañca rūpañca,  
asesaṃ uparujjhati,  
viññāṇassa nirodhena,  
etth'etaṃ uparujjhati.<sup>32</sup>*

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

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

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

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

*Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati,*

*kattha dīghañca rassañca,  
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,  
kattha nāmañca rūpañca,  
asesaṃ uparujjhati?*

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

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

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

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

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>3</sup> S III 151, see sermon 5.  
<sup>4</sup> S III 152, *Gaddulasutta*.  
<sup>5</sup> S III 142, *Phenapiṇḍūpamasutta*.  
<sup>6</sup> Ud 79, *Udenasutta*, see sermon 5.  
<sup>7</sup> S III 87, *Khajjanīyasutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> E.g. at M I 350, *Aṭṭhakanāgarasutta*.  
<sup>9</sup> E.g. at S II 65, *Cetanāsutta*.  
<sup>10</sup> E.g. at A I 122, *Saṅkhārasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> A II 157, *Cetanāsutta*.  
<sup>12</sup> See sermon 2.  
<sup>13</sup> A II 157, *Cetanāsutta*.  
<sup>14</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>15</sup> See sermon 1.  
<sup>16</sup> S II 4, *Vibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>17</sup> M I 301, *Cūḷavedallasutta*.  
<sup>18</sup> M II 231, *Pañcattayasutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> A I 261, *Runṇasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>21</sup> S V 421, *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*.  
<sup>22</sup> E.g. at Nid I 54: *taṇhālepo*.  
<sup>23</sup> DhP 335: *taṇhā loke visattikā*, (*Taṇhāvagga*).  
<sup>24</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>25</sup> See sermon 1.  
<sup>26</sup> Sn 756, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> S V 421, *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*.  
<sup>28</sup> S II 41, *Upavāṇasutta*.  
<sup>29</sup> E.g. at M III 299, *Indriyabhāvanāsutta*.  
<sup>30</sup> S III 58, *Udānasutta* (cf. *viññāṇaṃ ... anabhisaṅkhacca vimuttaṃ*).  
<sup>31</sup> E.g. at M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.  
<sup>32</sup> D I 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.  
<sup>33</sup> Sv II 393.

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

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

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

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. Towards the end of the last sermon we happened to quote a certain verse from the *Ke-vaḍḍhasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The verse runs as follows:

*Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ,  
anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,  
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati,  
ettha dīghañca rassañca,  
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,  
ettha nāmañca rūpañca,  
asesaṃ uparujjhati,  
viññānaṃ nirodhena,  
etth'etaṃ uparujjhati.*<sup>2</sup>

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

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

Let us now try to sort out the meaning of the difficult words in the first two lines. First of all, in the expression *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ*, there is the term *anidassana*. The meaning of the word *nidassana* is

fairly well known. It means ‘illustration’. Something that ‘throws light on’ or ‘makes clear’ is called *nidassana*. This is the basic sense.

We find an instance of the use of this word, even in this basic sense, in the first *Kosalasutta* among the Tens of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. It is in connection with the description of *abhibhāyatanā*, bases of mastery, where there is a reference to contemplation devices known as *kaṣiṇa*. It is said that even the flax flower can be used initially as a sign for *kaṣiṇa* meditation. A flax flower is described in the following words: *Umāpupphaṃ nīlaṃ nīlavaṇṇaṃ nīlanidassanaṃ nīlanibhāsaṃ*,<sup>3</sup> which may be rendered as: "The flax flower, blue, blue-coloured, manifesting blue, shining blue". *Nīlanidassanaṃ* suggests that the flax flower is an illustration of blue colour, or that it is a manifestation of blue. *Anidassana* could therefore be said to refer to whatever does not manifest anything.

In fact, we have a very good example in support of this suggested sense in the *Kakacūpamasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. There we find the Buddha putting a certain question to the monks in order to bring out a simile: "Monks, suppose a man comes with crimson, turmeric, indigo or carmine and says: ‘I shall draw pictures and make pictures appear on the sky!’ What do you think, monks, could that man draw pictures and make pictures appear there?" Then the monks reply: *Ayañhi, bhante, ākāso arūpī anidassano. Tattha na sukaraṃ rūpaṃ likhītuṃ, rūpapātubhāvaṃ kātuṃ*.<sup>4</sup> "This sky, Lord, is immaterial and non-illustrative. It is not easy to draw a picture there or make manifest pictures there."

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

Let us now see how meaningful that word is, when used with reference to consciousness as *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*. Why the sky is said to be non-manifestative we could easily understand by the simile. But how can consciousness become non-manifestative? First and foremost we can remind ourselves of the fact that our consciousness has in it the ability to reflect. That ability is called *paccavekkhana*,

‘looking back’. Sometimes the Buddha has given the simile of the mirror with reference to this ability, as for instance in the *AmbalatthikāRāhulovādasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.<sup>5</sup> In the *Ānandasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*, also, he has used the simile of the mirror.<sup>6</sup> In the former *sutta* preached to Venerable *Rāhula* the Buddha uses the simile of the mirror to stress the importance of reflection in regard to bodily, verbal, and mental action.

In our last sermon, we gave a simile of a dog crossing a plank over a stream and looking at its own reflection in the water.<sup>7</sup> That, too, is a kind of reflection. But from that we can deduce a certain principle with regard to the question of reflection, namely, that the word stands for a mode of becoming deluded as well as a mode of getting rid of the delusion. What creates a delusion is the way that dog is repeatedly looking down from his own point of view on the plank to see a dog in the water. That is unwise reflection born of non-radical attention, *ayoniso manasikāra*. Under the influence of the personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, it goes on looking at its own image, wagging its tail and growling. But wise reflection born of radical attention, *yoniso manasikāra*, is what is recommended in the *AmbalatthikāRāhulovādasutta* with its thematic repetitive phrase *paccavekkhitvā, paccavekkhitvā*,<sup>8</sup> "reflecting again and again".

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

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

We have already mentioned in previous sermons about the established consciousness and the unestablished consciousness.<sup>9</sup> A non-



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

By way of further clarification of this sense of *anidassana*, we may remind ourselves of the fact that manifestation requires something material. That is obvious even from that simile picked up at random from the *Kakacūpamasutta*. As for the consciousness of the *arahant*, the verse in question makes it clear that earth, water, fire, and air do not find a footing there.

It is because of these four great primaries that one gets a perception of form. They are said to be the cause and condition for the designation of the aggregate of form: *Cattāro kho, bhikkhu, mahābhūtā hetu, cattāro mahābhūtā paccayo rūpakkhandaḥssa paññāpanāya*.<sup>10</sup> "The four great primaries, monk, are the cause and condition for the designation of the form group".

Now the *arahant* has freed his mind from these four elements. As it is said in the *Dhātuvihaṅgasutta*: *Paṭhavīdhātuyā cittaṃ virājeti*,<sup>11</sup> "he makes his mind dispassionate with regard to the earth-element". *Āpodhātuyā cittaṃ virājeti*, "he makes his mind dispassionate with regard to the water-element". As he has freed his mind from the four elements through disenchantment, which makes them fade away, the *arahant's* reflection does not engender a perception of form. As the verse in question puts it rather rhetorically, *ettha āpo ca paṭhavī, tejo vāyo na gādhati*, "herein water and earth, fire and air find no footing".

Here the word *gādhati* is particularly significant. When, for instance, we want to plumb the depth of a deep well, we lower something material as a plumb into the well. Where it comes to stay, we take as the bottom. In the consciousness of the *arahant*, the material

elements cannot find such a footing. They cannot manifest themselves in that unplumbed depth of the *arahant's* consciousness.

*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ,  
anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,  
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati.*

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

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

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

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

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

ter of fact, all measurements are relative to some scale or other. They are meaningful within some framework of a scale.

In this sense, too, the worldling's way of thinking has a tendency to go to extremes. It goes to one extreme or the other. When it was said that the world, for the most part, rests on a dichotomy, such as that between the two views 'Is' and 'Is not',<sup>12</sup> this idea of a framework is already implicit. The worldling's ways of thought '**end-up**' in one extreme or the other within this framework. The *arahant* transcends it, his consciousness is, therefore, endless, *ananta*.

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

*Duddasaṃ anantaṃ nāma,  
na hi saccaṃ sudassanaṃ,  
paṭividdhā taṇhā jānato,  
passato natthi kiñcanaṃ.*<sup>13</sup>

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

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

The entire verse may now be rendered as follows:

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

And naught for him who knows and sees."

The commentator, however, is at a loss to determine whether the correct reading is *anataṃ* or *anantaṃ* and leaves the question open. He gives one interpretation in favour of the reading *anataṃ*.<sup>14</sup> To show its justifiability he says that *natā* is a synonym for *taṇhā*, or craving, and that *anataṃ* is a term for *Nibbāna*, in the sense that there is no craving in it. It must be pointed out that it is *nati* and not *natā* that is used as a synonym for *taṇhā*.

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

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

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

*Yassa jālinī visattikā,  
taṇhā natthi kuhiñci netave,  
taṃ Buddham anantagocaraṃ,  
apadaṃ kena padena nessatha?*<sup>15</sup>

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

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

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

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

The commentators seem to interpret this term as a reference to the Buddha’s omniscience - to his ability to attend to an infinite number of objects.<sup>16</sup> But this is not the sense in which we interpret the term here. The very fact that there is ‘**no object**’ makes the Buddha’s range endless and untraceable. Had there been an object, craving could have netted him in. In support of this interpretation, we may allude to the following couple of verses in the *Arahantavagga* of the *Dhammapada*.

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

*Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā,  
āhāre ca anissito,  
suññato animitto ca,  
vimokkho yassa gocaro,  
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ,  
padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ.*<sup>17</sup>

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

For instance, the word *sannicaya*, in this context, which we have rendered as ‘accumulation’, is suggestive of the heaping up of the five aggregates. The word *upacaya* is sometimes used with reference to this process of heaping up that goes on in the minds of the worldlings.<sup>18</sup> Now this heaping up, as well as the accumulation of *kamma*, is not there in the case of an *arahant*. Also, they have comprehended their food. The comprehension of food does not mean simply the usual reflection on food in terms of elements. Nor does it imply just one kind of food, but all the four nutriments mentioned in the *Dhamma*, namely *kabaḷiṅkārāhāra*, material food, *phassa*, contact, *mano-sāñcetanā*, volition, and *viññāṇa*, consciousness.<sup>19</sup>

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

The word *gati* in this last line is interpreted by the commentators as a reference to the ‘whereabouts’ of the *arahants* after their *parinibbāna*.<sup>20</sup> It has dubious associations of some place as a destination. But in this context, *gati* does not lend itself to such an interpretation. It only refers to their mental compass, which is untraceable, because of their deliverance through the void and the signless.

The next verse also brings out this idea. *Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā, āhāre ca anissito*, "whose influxes are extinct and who is unattached in regard to nutriment". *Suññāto animitto ca, vimokkho yassa gocaro*, "whose range is the void and the signless". *Ākāse va sakuntānaṃ, padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ*, "his path is hard to trace, like that of birds in the sky". This reminds us of the last line of the verse quoted earlier, *apadaṃ kena padena nessatha*, "by what track could one lead him, who is trackless"?<sup>21</sup> These two verses, then, throw more light on the meaning of the expression *ananta-gocara* - of infinite range - used as an epithet for the Awakened One.

Let us now get at the meaning of the term *sabbato pabham*, in the context *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbato pabham*.<sup>22</sup> In our discussion of the significance of the drama and the cinema we mentioned that it is the darkness in the background which keeps the audience entranced in a way that they identify themselves with the characters and react accordingly.<sup>23</sup> The darkness in the background throws a spell of delusion. That is what makes for 'enjoyment'.

Of course, there is some sort of light in the cinema hall. But that is very limited. Some times it is only a beam of light, directed on the screen. In a previous sermon we happened to mention that even in the case of a matinee show, dark curtains and closed doors and windows ensure the necessary dark background.<sup>24</sup> Here, in this simile, we have a clue to the meaning *sabbato pabham*, luminous or lustrous on all sides. Suppose a matinee show is going on and one is enjoying it, entranced and deluded by it. Suddenly doors and windows are flung open and the dark curtains are removed. Then immediately one slips out of the cinema world. The film may go on, but because of the light coming from all sides, the limited illumination on the screen fades away, before the total illumination. The film thereby loses its enjoyable quality.

As far as consciousness, or *viññāna*, is concerned, it is not something completely different from wisdom, *paññā*, as it is defined in the *Mahāvedallasutta*. However, there is also a difference between them, *paññā bhāvetabbā, viññānaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*, "wisdom is to be developed, consciousness is to be comprehended".<sup>25</sup> Here it is said that one has to comprehend the nature of consciousness.

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

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

*Catasso imā, bhikkhave, pabhā. Katamā catasso? Candappabhā, suriyappabhā, aggippabhā, paññāpabhā. Imā kho, bhikkhave, catasso pabhā. Etad aggaṃ, bhikkhave, imāsaṃ catunnaṃ pabhānaṃ yadidaṃ paññāpabhā.*<sup>26</sup> "Monks, there are these four lustres. Which four? The lustre of the moon, the lustre of the sun, the lustre of fire, and the lustre of wisdom. These, monks, are the four lustres. This, monks, is the highest among these four lustres, namely the lustre of wisdom."

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

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

*Pabhassaram idaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vipṇamuttaṃ. Taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa citta bhāvanā atthī'ti vadāmi.*<sup>27</sup>

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

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

It is sufficiently clear, then, that the allusion is to the luminous mind, the consciousness of the *arahant*, which is non-manifestative,



infinite, and all lustrous. To revert to the analogy of the cinema which, at least in a limited sense, helps us to form an idea about it, we have spoken about the stilling of all preparations.<sup>28</sup> Now in the case of the film, too, there is a stilling of preparations. That is to say, the preparations which go to make it a 'movie' film are 'stilled'. The multicoloured dresses of actors and actresses become colourless before that illumination, even in the case of a technicolour film. The scenes on the screen get blurred before the light that suddenly envelops them.

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

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

As to the term *virāga*, we have already shown that it can be understood in two senses, that is, dispassion as well as the fading away which brings about the dispassion.<sup>29</sup> Now in this case, too, the fading away occurred, not by any other means, but by the very fact that the limited narrow beam of consciousness got superseded by the unlimited light of wisdom.

*Nirodha* means cessation, and the film has now ceased to be a film, though the machines are still active. We have already mentioned that in the last analysis a film is produced by the audience.<sup>30</sup> So its cessation, too, is a matter for the audience. This, then, is the cessation of the film.

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

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

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

Here, too, we have a little problem. Generally, *nirujjhati* and *uparujjhati* are regarded as synonymous. The way these two verbs are used in some *suttas* would even suggest that they mean the same thing. As a matter of fact, even the *CūḷaNiddesa*, which is a very old commentary, paraphrases *uparujjhati* by *nirujjhati*: *uparujjhatī'ti nirujjhati*.<sup>31</sup>

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

But that is not all. By way of preparing the background for the discussion, we have already made a brief allusion to the circumstances in which the Buddha uttered this verse.<sup>32</sup> What provided the

context for its utterance was a riddle that occurred to a certain monk in a moment of fancy. The riddle was: ‘Where do these four great primaries cease altogether?’ There the verb used is *nirujjhanti*.<sup>33</sup> So in order to find where they cease, he whimsically went from heaven to heaven and from *Brahma*-world to *Brahma*-world. As we mentioned earlier, too, it was when the *Mahā Brahma* directed that monk to the Buddha, saying: ‘Why ‘on earth’ did you come all this way when the Buddha is there to ask?’, that the Buddha reworded the question. He pointed out that the question was incorrectly worded and revised it as follows, before venturing to answer it:

*Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati,  
kattha dīghañca rassañca,  
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,  
kattha nāmañca rūpañca,  
asesaṃ uparujjhati?*<sup>34</sup>

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

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

What is the secret behind this peculiar usage? The problem that occurred to this monk is actually of the type that the materialists of today conceive of. It is, in itself, a fallacy. To say that the four elements **cease** somewhere in the world, or in the universe, is a contradiction in terms. Why? Because the very question: ‘Where do they

cease?', presupposes an answer in terms of those elements, by way of defining that place. This is the kind of uncouth question an ordinary materially inclined person would ask.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Venerable *Buddhaghosa* keeps on reminding the reader that the questions are relevant only to the organic realm, *upādinnaṃ yeva sandhāya pucchati*.<sup>35</sup> So he interprets the terms *dīghañca rassañca*, long and short, as relative distinctions of a person’s height, that is tallness and shortness. Similarly, the words *aṇuṃ thūlaṃ*, subtle and gross, are said to mean the small and big in the size of the body. Likewise *subha* and *asubhaṃ* are taken to refer to the comely and the ugly in terms of body’s appearance.

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

The significance of these relative terms, from the linguistic point of view, has been overlooked. Words like *dīghaṃ/rassaṃ* and *aṇuṃ/thūlaṃ* do not refer to the stature and size of some person. What they convey is the dichotomous nature of concepts in the world. All those deeper implications are obscured by the reference to a person’s outward appearance. The confusion becomes worse confounded, when

*nāmañca rūpañca* is interpreted as the name and the shape of a person. So the stage is already set for a shallow interpretation, even before presenting the verse beginning with *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*.

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

The commentator begins his exposition with the word *viññāṇaṃ* itself. He comes out with a peculiar etymology: *Viññāṇan'ti tattha viññātabbanti viññāṇaṃ nibbānassa nāmaṃ*, which means that the word *viññāṇa*, or consciousness, is in this context a synonym for *Nibbāna*, in the sense that it is 'to be known', *viññātabbaṃ*. This forced etymology is far from convincing, since such a usage is not attested elsewhere. Moreover, we come across a long list of epithets for *Nibbāna*, as many as thirty-three, in the *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, but *viññāṇa* is not counted as one.<sup>36</sup> In fact, nowhere in the discourses is *viññāṇa* used as a synonym for *Nibbāna*.

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

The commentarial interpretation of the term *sabbato pabhaṃ* is even more confusing. The word *pabhā* is explained as a synonym for *papa*, meaning 'ford'. The *bha* element in the word, he explains, is a result of consonantal interchange with the original *pa* in *papa*. *Pakā-rassa pana bhakāro kato*. The idea is that the original form of this particular term for *Nibbāna* is *sabbato papaṃ*. The meaning attributed to it is 'with fords on all sides'. *Nibbāna* is supposed to be metaphorically conceived as the ocean, to get down into which there are fords on all sides, namely the thirty-eight topics of meditation. This

interpretation seems rather far fetched. It is as if the commentator has resorted to this simile of a ford, because he is already 'in deep waters'! The word *pabhā*, as it is, clearly means light, or radiance, and its association with wisdom is also well attested in the canon.

Though in his commentary to the *Dīgha Nikāya* Venerable *Buddhaghosa* advances the above interpretation, in his commentary to the *Majjhima Nikāya* he seems to have had second thoughts on the problem. In the *Brahmanimantanikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, also, the first two lines of the verse, *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*, occur.<sup>37</sup> But here the commentator follows a different line of interpretation. Whereas in his commentary to the *Kevaḍḍhasutta* he explains *anidassanaṃ* as an epithet of *Nibbāna*, in the sense of having nothing to compare with, here he takes it in the sense of not being visible to the eye. *Cakkhuviññānaṃ āpāthaṃ anupagamanato anidassanaṃ nāma*,<sup>38</sup> "it is called *anidassana* because it does not come within the range of eye-consciousness".

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

The etymology of the term *sabbato pabhaṃ* has been given a twist, for the word *sabbato* is taken in a comparative sense, 'more lustrous than anything'. As we have pointed out, the term actually means 'lustrous on all sides'. Then a second interpretation is given, bringing in the word *pabhū*, 'lord' or 'chief'. *Sabbato vā pabhū*, that is to say more prominent than anything else. In support of it he says: *Asukadisāya nāma nibbānaṃ natthi'ti na vattabbaṃ*, "it should not be said that in such and such a direction *Nibbāna* is not to be found". He says that it is called *pabhū*, or lord, because it is to be found in all directions. Only as the third interpretation he cites his simile of the ford already given in his commentary to the *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.

What is the reason for giving so many figurative interpretations as alternatives to such a significant verse? Surely the Buddha would not

have intended the verse to convey so many conflicting meanings, when he preached it.

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

We had occasion to mention in our very first sermon that the Buddha himself has prophesied that those discourse which deal with voidness would, in time to come, go into disuse, with their deeper meanings obscured.<sup>39</sup> The interpretations just quoted go to show that already the prediction has come true to a great extent.

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

*Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ, taṃ paṭhaviyā paṭhavittena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassa vāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ, pajāpatissa pajāpatittena ananubhūtaṃ, brahmānaṃ brahmattena ananubhūtaṃ, ābhassarānaṃ ābhassarattena ananubhūtaṃ, subhakiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhattena ananubhūtaṃ, vehapphalānaṃ vehapphalatte ananubhūtaṃ, abhibhussa abhibhuttena ananubhūtaṃ, sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ.*<sup>40</sup>

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



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

The special significance of this assertion lies in the context in which the Buddha declared it. It is to dispel a wrong view that *Baka* the *Brahma* conceived, in regarding his *Brahma* status as permanent, ever lasting and eternal, that the Buddha made this declaration before that *Brahma* himself in the *Brahma* world. The whole point of the discourse, then, is to challenge the wrong view of the *Brahma*, by asserting that the non-manifestative consciousness of the *arahant* is above the worldly concepts of elements and divinity and the questionable reality attributed to them. In other words, they do not manifest themselves in it. They are transcended.

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> D I 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> A V 61, *Kosalasutta*.  
<sup>4</sup> M I 127, *Kakacūpamasutta*.  
<sup>5</sup> M I 415, *AmbalatthikāRāhulovādasutta*.  
<sup>6</sup> S III 105, *Ānandasutta*.  
<sup>7</sup> See sermon 6.  
<sup>8</sup> M I 415, *AmbalatthikāRāhulovādasutta*.  
<sup>9</sup> See sermon 3 and 4.  
<sup>10</sup> M III 17, *MahāPuṇṇamasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> M III 240, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>12</sup> S II 17, *Kaccāyanagottasutta*, see sermon 4.  
<sup>13</sup> Ud 80, *DutiyaNibbānapaṭisaṃyuttasutta*.  
<sup>14</sup> Ud-a 393.  
<sup>15</sup> DhP 180, *Buddhavagga*.  
<sup>16</sup> DhP-a III 197.  
<sup>17</sup> DhP 92 - 93, *Arahantavagga*.  
<sup>18</sup> E.g. at M III 287, *MahāSaḷāyatānikasutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> E.g. at S II 101, *Atthirāgasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> DhP -a II 173.  
<sup>21</sup> DhP 180, *Buddhavagga*.  
<sup>22</sup> D I 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>24</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>25</sup> M I 293, *MahāVedallasutta*.  
<sup>26</sup> A II 139, *Pabhāsutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> A I 10, *Accharāsaṅghātavagga*.  
<sup>28</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>29</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>30</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>31</sup> Nid II 110.  
<sup>32</sup> See sermon 6.  
<sup>33</sup> D I 215, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.  
<sup>34</sup> D I 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.  
<sup>35</sup> Sv II 393.  
<sup>36</sup> S IV 359, *Asaṅkhatasāmyutta*.  
<sup>37</sup> M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.  
<sup>38</sup> Ps II 413.

<sup>39</sup> S II 267, *Āṇisutta*; see sermon 1.

<sup>40</sup> M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.

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

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

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

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

The other day we ended our sermon by discussing how far the *Brahmanimantanikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* helps us to understand what *anidassana viññāṇa* is. We quoted a certain paragraph from that discourse as a starting point for our discussion. Let us now remind ourselves of it:

*Viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ, taṃ paṭhaviyā  
paṭhavittena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa  
tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassa vāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ  
bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ, pajā-  
patissa pajāpatittena ananubhūtaṃ, brahmānaṃ brahmattena an-  
anubhūtaṃ, ābhassarānaṃ ābhassarattena ananubhūtaṃ, subha-  
kiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhattena ananubhūtaṃ, vehapphalānaṃ vehap-  
phalattena ananubhūtaṃ, abhibhussa abhibhuttena ananubhūtaṃ,  
sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ.*<sup>2</sup>

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

The gist of this paragraph is that the non-manifestative consciousness which is infinite and all lustrous, is free from the qualities associated with any of the concepts in the list, such as the earthiness of earth and the wateriness of water. That is to say it is not under their

influence, it does not partake of them, *ananubhūtaṃ*. Whatever nature the world attributes to these concepts, whatever reality they invest it with, that is not registered in this non-manifestative consciousness. That is why this consciousness is said to be uninfluenced by them.

Usually, the worldlings attribute a certain degree of reality to concepts in everyday usage. These may be reckoned as mind-objects, things that the mind attends to. The word *dhamma* also means ‘a thing’, so the worldling thinks that there is some-‘thing’ in each of these concepts. Or, in other words, they believe that there is something as an inherent nature or essence in these objects of the mind.

But the quotation in question seems to imply that this so-called nature is not registered in the *arahant*’s mind. It is extremely necessary for the worldling to think that there is some real nature in these mind-objects. Why? Because in order to think of them as objects they have to have some essence, at least they must be invested with an essence, and so the worldlings do invest them with some sort of an essence, and that is the earthiness of earth, the wateriness of water, (etc.). Likewise there is a being-hood in beings, a *deva*-hood in *devas*, a *Pajāpati*-hood in *Pajāpati*, a *Brahma*-hood in *Brahma*, so much so that even in the concept of all, there is an all-ness - and this is the worldlings’ standpoint.

Attributing a reality to whatever concept that comes up, the worldlings create for themselves perceptions of permanence, perceptions of the beautiful, and perceptions of self. In other words, they objectify these concepts in terms of craving, conceit and views. That objectification takes the form of some inherent nature attributed to them, such as earthiness, *deva*-hood (etc.).

But as for the non-manifestative consciousness, it is free from the so-called natures that delude the worldlings. In the consciousness of the *arahants*, there is not that infatuation with regard to the mass of concepts which the worldlings imagine as real, in order to keep going this drama of existence. This fact is clearly borne out by another statement in the *Brahmanimantānikasutta*. The Buddha makes the following declaration, to break the conceit of *Baka* the *Brahma*, who conceived the idea of permanence regarding his status as a *Brahma*:

*Paṭhaviṃ kho ahaṃ, brahme, paṭhavito abhiññāya yāvataṃ paṭhaviyā paṭhavittena ananubhūtaṃ tadabhiññāya paṭhaviṃ nāhosim, paṭhaviyā nāhosim, paṭhavito nāhosim, paṭhaviṃ me'ti nāhosim, paṭhaviṃ nābhivadiṃ*<sup>3</sup>

"Having understood through higher knowledge earth as earth, O Brahma," (that is to say having understood by means of a special kind of knowledge, and not by means of the ordinary sense-perception) "and having understood through higher knowledge whatever that does not partake of the earthiness of earth", (the reference here is to that non-manifestative consciousness, which is to be described in the passage to follow) "I did not claim to be earth", *paṭhaviṃ nāhosim*, "I did not claim to be on earth", *paṭhaviyā nāhosim*, "I did not claim to be from earth", *paṭhavito nāhosim*, "I did not claim earth as mine", *paṭhaviṃ me'ti nāhosim*, "I did not assert earth", *paṭhaviṃ nābhivadiṃ*.

The declensional forms given here are also suggestive of the fact that once the worldlings attribute some inherent nature to those concepts in terms of a 'ness', as in earthy-ness, and make them amenable to their cravings, conceits and views, declensional forms come into usage, a few instances of which have been mentioned here. So, with regard to this earth, one can conceive of it as 'my earth', or as 'I am on earth', or 'I who am on the earth', or 'from the earth'. By holding on tenaciously to these declensional forms of one's own creation, one is only asserting one's ego.

Now, for instance, we all know that what is called 'a flower' is something that can fade away. But when one conceives of it as 'The-flower-I-saw', and thereby appropriates it into the concept of an I, it gets invested with the nature of permanence, since it can be 'recalled'. A perception of permanence which enables one to think about it again, arises out of it. This is the idea behind the above reference.

It is in the nature of the released mind not to take these concepts seriously. It does not have a tenacious grasp on these declensional forms. It is convinced of the fact that they are mere conventions in ordinary usage. Due to that conviction itself, it is not subject to them. "I did not claim to be earth, I did not claim to be on earth, I did not

claim to be from earth, I did not claim earth as mine, I did not assert earth", *paṭhaviṃ nābhivadim*.

Here the word *abhivadim* is suggestive of conceit. The three terms *abhinandati*, *abhivadati* and *ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati* are often mentioned together in the discourses.<sup>4</sup> *Abhinandati* means delighting in particular, which is suggestive of craving. *Abhivadati* means an assertion by way of conceit - an assertion which implies 'a taking up' of something. *Ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati* stands for dogmatic involvement regarding views. Thus *abhinandati*, *abhivadati* and *ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati* correspond to the three terms *taṇhā*, craving, *māna*, conceit, and *diṭṭhi*, views, respectively.

Now out of these, what we find here is *abhivadati - paṭhaviṃ nābhivadim*, "I did not assert earth" - I did not make any assertion about earth by way of conceit. From this, too, we can infer that the ordinary man in this world takes his perception of the earth seriously, and by conceiving of it as 'earth is mine', 'I am on the earth', (etc.), invests the concepts with a permanent nature. But this is a kind of device the worldlings adopt in order to perpetuate the drama of existence. However, everyone of these elements is void.

In this particular context, the four elements earth, water, fire and air, are mentioned at the very outset. The Buddha, having understood the emptiness and impermanence of these elements, does not cling to them. The ordinary worldling, on the other hand, clings to the perception of earth in a piece of ice because of its hardness. But as we know, when we heat it up to a certain degree, its watery quality reveals itself. Further heating would bring up its fiery nature. Continuous heating will convert it into vapour, revealing its air quality.

Thus these four great primaries, which the world clings to, also have the nature of impermanence about them. The emancipated one, who rightly understands this impermanence through his higher knowledge, does not get upset by their ghostly configurations. His consciousness is not subject to them. This is the import of the above paragraph.

The same holds true with regard to the other concepts. *Saṃsāric* beings have their conventional usages. One might think of oneself as a god among gods. Now *Baka* the *Brahma* had the conceit 'I am a *Brahma*'. But even his *Brahma*-status gets melted away like that

piece of ice, at least after some aeons. So even *Brahma*-hood is subject to 'liquidation', like an ice-cube.

In this way, the released consciousness of the *arahant* does not register a perception of permanence with regard to the concepts which masquerade as real in the worldling's drama of existence. That is why it is called 'non-manifestative' consciousness. That non-manifestative consciousness is free from those concepts.

By way of further explanation of the nature of this released mind, we may drop a hint through the analogy of the film and the drama, which we have employed throughout. Now, for instance, in order to produce a tragic scene on the screen, the film producers adopt subtle devices and camera tricks. Sometimes an awe-inspiring scene of conflagration or ruthless arson, which drives terror into the hearts of the audience, is produced with the help of cardboard houses. Cardboard houses are set on fire, but the audience is hoodwinked into thinking that a huge mansion is on fire. Similarly, terrific traffic accidents are displayed on the screen with the help of a few toys.

In this drama of existence, too, there are similar tragic scenes. Now, in spite of their tragic quality, if any member of the audience truly understands at that moment that these are cardboard houses and toys toppled from hill tops, he sees something comic in the apparently tragic. Likewise, in this drama of existence, there is a tragic aspect as well as a comic aspect.

As a matter of fact, both these words, tragic and comic, can be accommodated within the highly significant term *saṃvega*, anguish, sense of urgency. In trying to arouse *saṃvega* with regard to *saṅkhāras*, or preparations, we could bring in both these attitudes. The ordinary worldling sees only the tragic side of the drama of existence, and that because of his ignorance. But the *arahant*, the emancipated one, sees in this drama of existence a comic side as well.

As an illustration we may allude to those occasions in which the Buddha himself and those disciples with psychic powers like Venerable *MahāMoggalāna*, are said to have shown a faint smile, *situp-pāda*, on seeing how beings in *saṃsāra* are reborn in high and low realms according to their deeds, as in a puppet show.<sup>5</sup> Of course, that spontaneous smile has nothing sarcastic or unkind about it. But all the same, it gives us a certain hint. This spontaneous smile seems to



be the outcome of an insight into the comic aspect of this existential drama. The faint smile is aroused by the conviction of the utter futility and insubstantiality of the existential drama, seeing how beings who enjoyed high positions come down to the level of hungry ghosts, *petas*, or even to lower realms in their very next birth. It is somewhat like the response of one who has correctly understood the impermanence and the illusory nature of things shown on a film screen.

When one comes to think of this drama of existence, *saṃsāric* beings appear like puppets drawn upwards by the five higher fetters, *uddhambhāgiya saṃyojana*, and drawn downwards by the five lower fetters, *orambhāgiya saṃyojana*. They reappear more or less like puppets, manipulated up and down by strings, which are but the results of their own deeds.

The wherewithal for the drama of existence is supplied by the four great primaries - the four basic elements of earth, water, fire and air. In the case of a film or a drama, sometimes the same object can be improvised in a number of ways, to produce various scenes and acts. What in one scene serves as a sitting-stool, could be improvised as a footstool in another scene, and as a table in yet another. Similarly, there is something called double-acting in films. The same actor can delineate two characters and appear in different guises in two scenes.

A similar state of affairs is to be found in this drama of existence. In fact, the Buddha has declared that there is not a single being in *saṃsāra* who has not been one of our relations at some time or other.<sup>6</sup> We are in the habit of putting down such relations to a distant past, in order to avoid a rift in our picture of the world by upsetting social conventions. But when one comes to think of it in accordance with the *Dhamma*, and also on the strength of certain well attested facts, sometimes the male or the female baby cuddled by a mother could turn out to be her own dead father or mother.

Such a strangely ludicrous position is to be found in the acts of this drama of existence. Usually the world is unaware of such happenings. Though ludicrous, the world cannot afford to laugh at it. Rather, it should be regarded as a sufficient reason for arousing an anguished sense of urgency: ‘What a pity that we are subject to such a state of affairs! What a pity that we do not understand it because of

the power of influxes and latencies and thereby heap up defilements!’

Such an awareness of the emptiness of all this can give rise to anguish. One can get some understanding on the lines of the signless, the unsatisfactory, and the void, by contemplating these facts. One can also contemplate on the four elements, how they are at the beginning of a world period, and how they get destroyed at the end of a world period, in the conflagration at the end of an aeon. Likewise, when one comes to think of the state of persons or beings in general, in accordance with this fact of relationship, there is much room for anguish and a sense of urgency.

It is because of all this that the Buddha sometimes declares, as in the discourse on the rising of seven suns, *Sattasuriyasutta*, that this is "enough to get disenchanted with all preparations, enough to get detached from them, enough to get released from them", *alameva sabbasāṅkhāresu nibbindituṃ alaṃ virajjituṃ alaṃ vimuccituṃ*.<sup>7</sup>

We have been drawing upon a particular nuance of the term *saiṅkhāra* throughout, that is, as things comparable to those instruments, temporarily improvised in a dramatic performance just for the purpose of producing various acts on the stage. It is the same with persons, who are like actors playing their parts.

Beings, who are born in accordance with their karma, entertain the conceit ‘I am a god’, ‘I am a *Brahma*’. Once their karma is spent up, they get destroyed and are reborn somewhere or other. It is the same with those items used in a drama, such as the stool and the footstool. But the intriguing fact is that those in the audience, watching each of those acts, grasp as such whatever objects they see on the stage when they produce their individual dramas.

We have already mentioned at the very outset that the final stage in the production of a drama is a matter for the audience and not for the theatricians. Each member of the audience creates a drama in his own mind, putting together all preparations. What serves as a stool in one act of the drama, may be used as a footstool in the next. In the first instance it sinks into the minds of the audience as a stool, and in the next as a footstool. It is the same in the case of beings and their relationships.

It must have been due to this state of affairs in the drama of existence, which arouses anguish, that the Buddha makes the declaration in quite a number of discourses dealing with the topic of impermanence, including those which describe the destruction of the aeon: 'This is enough, monks, to get disenchanted with all preparations, to get detached from them, to get released from them'.

These preparations are comparable to a film reel, which is the basic requirement for the film of name-and-form shown on the screen of consciousness of beings in this world. As the world is regarded as a sort of stage, trees, beings and objects in our environment are like objects on the stage. But the intriguing fact about it is that the ordinary man in the world is unaware of their 'prepared' nature as a framework.

When one is watching a film, one becomes unaware of the fact that it is just something shown on the screen. At that moment it appears as something real and life-like. It is about this apparent reality that the Buddha speaks when he utters the following lines in the *Iti-vuttaka: Jātaṃ bhūtaṃ samuppannaṃ, kataṃ saṅkhatamaddhavaṃ*;<sup>8</sup> "born, become, arisen, made up, prepared, unstable". Whatever appears as real in this world, is actually made and prepared by *saṅkhāras*. It is their insubstantial nature, their impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self nature, that is hinted at by these lines.

The term *saṅkhāra* is suggestive of some artificiality about this world. Everything that goes to 'make-it-up' is a *saṅkhāra*. The non-manifestative consciousness, which is aware of its impermanent nature, is therefore free from these preparations. It is free from those concepts which the worldlings cling to. It remains unshaken by their ghostly transfigurations. We come across four wonderful verses in the *Adhimutta Theragāthā* which, though extremely simple, give us a deep insight into this freedom in the *arahant's* mind.

The story of Venerable *Adhimutta* is a marvellous one.<sup>9</sup> While going through a forest Venerable *Adhimutta* got caught to a band of robbers, who were just getting ready to offer a human sacrifice to the gods. So they got hold of this *arahant* as their victim. But the latter showed no consternation. There was no fear or terror in his face. The bandit chief asked him why he is unmoved. Then the Venerable

*Adhimutta* uttered a set of verses in reply. Out of them, we may quote the following four significant verses:

*Natthi cetasikaṃ dukkhaṃ,  
anapekkhassa gāmaṇi,  
atikkantā bhayā sabbe,  
khīṇasaṃyojanassa ve.*<sup>10</sup>

"There is no mental pain  
To one with no expectations, oh headman,  
All fears have been transcended  
By one whose fetters are extinct."

*Na me hoti 'ahosin'ti,  
'bhavissan'ti na hoti me,  
saṅkhārā vibhavissanti,  
tattha kā paridevanā?*<sup>11</sup>

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

*Suddhaṃ dhammasamuppādaṃ,  
suddhaṃ saṅkhārasantatiṃ,  
passantassa yathābhūtaṃ,  
na bhayaṃ hoti gāmaṇi.*<sup>12</sup>

"To one who sees as it is,  
The arising of pure *dhammas*  
And the sequence of pure preparations,  
There is no fear, oh headman."

*Tiṇakaṭṭhasamaṃ lokaṃ,  
yadā paññāya passati,  
mamattaṃ so asaṃvindaṃ,  
'natthi me'ti na socati.*<sup>13</sup>

"When one sees with wisdom,  
This world as comparable to grass and twigs,  
Not finding anything worthwhile holding on as mine,  
One does not grieve: 'O! I have nothing!'"

At least a fraction of the gist of these four verses has already come up in some form or other in the sermons given so far. Now as for the first verse, addressed to the bandit chief, the first two lines

say that there is no mental pain to one who has no expectations, cravings, or desire. The next two lines state that one whose fetters are destroyed has transcended fears.

To begin with, let us get at the meaning of this verse. Here it is said that there is no mental pain, *natthi cetasikaṃ dukkhaṃ*. In an earlier sermon based on the *Cetanāsutta* we happened to mention that for one who does not take body, word, and mind as real, there is no inward pleasure and pain, *ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ*.<sup>14</sup> The relevant quotation is:

*Avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā so kāyo na hoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ ... sā vācā na hoti ... so mano na hoti ... khettaṃ taṃ na hoti, vatthum taṃ na hoti, āyatanaṃ taṃ na hoti, adhikaraṇaṃ taṃ na hoti, yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhattaṃ sukhadukkhaṃ.*<sup>15</sup>

With the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance, the *arahant* has no notion of a body. That is, he does not have a perception of a body, like that of a worldling, who takes it as such, due to his perception of the compact, *ghanasaññā*. Likewise that speech is not there, *sā vācā na hoti*. The basic reason for speech-preparation is the reality attributed to words and linguistic usages. When, for instance, someone scolds us, we are displeased at it because of the reality given to those words. Similarly, that mind is not there, *so mano na hoti*. It is only the collocation of preparations which arise and cease that is conceived as ‘my mind’.

Therefore, whatever field, site, base or reason, owing to which there can arise inward pleasure or pain, is no longer there. If the bandits had actually killed him, he would not have had any mental pain, because he lets go before *Māra* comes to grab. This is the idea expressed in the first verse.

As for the second verse, there too the idea of voidness is well expressed. The thought ‘I was’, does not occur to me. The idea ‘I am’ is not in me. Nor do I entertain the idea ‘I will be’. That is to say, it does not occur to me that I had a past or that I will have a future. It only occurs to me that preparations get destroyed. That was what happened in the past and will happen in the future. So what is there to lament?

A very important idea emerges from these verses. Now this series of sermons is on the subject of *Nibbāna*. We thought of giving these sermons because of the existing variety of conflicting views on *Nibbāna*. There is no clear idea even about our goal, not only among non-Buddhists, but even among Buddhists themselves. From these verses we can glean some important facts. Here the reference is to existence. This *arahant* must have had numerous births as *pretas*, *Brahmas*, gods, and human beings. But he is not saying something false here. What is really meant by saying that it does not occur to me 'I was'?

Ordinary worldlings, or even those with higher psychic powers, when they see their past lives think of it as 'I was so and so in such and such a birth'. Sometimes one entertains a conceit at the thought 'I was a god', 'I was a *Brahma*'. If he had been an animal or a *preta*, he is somewhat displeased. Such is not the case with this *arahant*. He sees that what was in the past is a mere heap of preparations, and what will be in the future is again a heap of preparations. It is like the case of that cinema goer who understands that whatever comes up in the film is artificially got up. It is a state of mind aroused by wisdom. 'So what is there to lament', is the attitude resulting from it.

On an earlier occasion, we happened to compare these preparations to a heap of windings and unwindings in existence.<sup>16</sup> Now as to this process of winding and unwinding, we may take as an illustration the case of a rope. There is a winding and an unwinding in it. We can form an idea about the nature of this existence even with the help of a simple illustration.

*Nibbāna* has been defined as the cessation of existence.<sup>17</sup> The Buddha says that when he is preaching about the cessation of existence, some people, particularly the *brahmins* who cling to a soul theory, bring up the charge of nihilism against him.<sup>18</sup> Not only those *brahmins* and heretics believing in a soul theory, but even some Buddhist scholars are scared of the term *bhavanirodha*, fearing that it leads to a nihilistic interpretation of *Nibbāna*. That is why they try to mystify *Nibbāna* in various ways. What is the secret behind this attitude? It is simply the lack of a clear understanding of the unique philosophy made known by the Buddha.

Before the advent of the Buddha, the world conceived of existence in terms of a perdurable essence as ‘being’, *sat*. So the idea of destroying that essence of being was regarded as annihilationism. It was some state of a soul conceived as ‘I’ and ‘mine’. But according to the law of dependent arising made known by the Buddha, existence is something that depends on grasping, *upādānapaccayā bhavo*. It is due to grasping that there comes to be an existence. This is the pivotal point in this teaching.

In the case of the footstool, referred to earlier, it became a footstool when it was used as such. If in the next act it is used to sit on, it becomes a stool. When it serves as a table, it becomes a table. Similarly in a drama, the same piece of wood, which in one act serves as a walking stick to lean on, could be seized as a stick to beat with, in the next act.

In the same way, there is no essential thing-hood in the things taken as real by the world. They appear as things due to cravings, conceits and views. They are conditioned by the mind, but these psychological causes are ignored by the world, once concepts and designations are superimposed on them. Then they are treated as real objects and made amenable to grammar and syntax, so as to entertain such conceits and imaginings as, for instance, ‘in the chair’, ‘on the chair’, ‘chair is mine’, and so on.

Such a tendency is not there in the released mind of the *arahant*. He has understood the fact that existence is due to grasping, *upādānapaccayā bhavo*. Generally, in the explanation of the law of dependent arising, the statement ‘dependent on grasping, becoming’ is supposed to imply that one’s next life is due to one’s grasping in this life. But this becoming is something that goes on from moment to moment. Now, for instance, what I am now holding in my hand has become a fan because I am using it as a fan. Even if it is made out of some other material, it will still be called a fan. But if it were used for some other purpose, it could become something else. This way we can understand how existence is dependent on grasping.

We began our discussion with the statement that existence is a heap of windings and unwindings. Let us now think of a simple illustration. Suppose a rope or a cord is being made up by winding some strands from either end by two persons. For the strands to

gather the necessary tension, the two persons have to go on winding in opposite directions. But for the sake of an illustration, let us imagine a situation in which a third person catches hold of the strands in the middle, just before the other two start their winding. Oddly enough, by mistake, those two start winding in the same direction. Both are unaware of the fact that their winding is at the same time an unwinding. The one in the middle, too, is ignorant that it is his tight grasp in the middle which is the cause of stress and tension.

To all appearance, a cord is being made up which may be taken as two cords on either side of the one who has his hold on the middle. However, viewed from a distance, for all practical purposes it is just one cord that is being winded up.

To introduce a note of discord into this picture, let us suppose that the man in the middle suddenly lets go of his hold with a ‘twang’. Now what happens to the cord? The windings in the same direction from both ends, which made it a cord, immediately get neutralized and **the cord ceases to be a cord!** Something like the stilling of all preparations and the abandonment of all assets happens at that moment. One realizes, ‘as-it-is’, that no real cord existed at all.

The same state of affairs prevails in this world. The impermanence of this world, according to the Buddha, does not affect us so long as there is no grasping on our part. All windings in this world get unwinded immediately. This is the nature of the world. This is what is meant by *udayabbaya*, or rise and fall.

Now what happens if there is no grasping in the middle while the winding is going on in the same direction from both ends? No cord at all is made up, even if the two at either end go on winding for aeons and aeons. Why? Simply because they are winding in the same direction.

It is the same in the case of the world. The impermanence we see around us in this world does not affect us by itself. We are affected only when we grasp. It is the grasp in the middle that accounts for the cord, or rather, for whatever **has the semblance of a cord**. In fact, this is what the worldlings call ‘the world’. This is what they take as **real**. Now what is the consequence of taking it to be real? If it is real and permanent, whatever is contrary to it, is annihilation, the destruction of a real world.



Keeping in mind the meaning of the Buddha's dictum 'dependent on grasping is existence', *upādānapaccayā bhavo*, if one cares to reflect on this little illustration, one would realize that there is actually nothing real to get destroyed. There is no self or soul at all to get destroyed.

As a matter of fact, the impermanence of the world is a process of momentary arisings and ceasings. Given the grasping in the middle, that is to say, 'dependent on grasping is becoming', the other links follow suit, namely 'dependent on becoming, birth; dependent on birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise', *bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmarañam sokaparideva-dukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti*.

It is somewhat like the unpleasant tension caused by the winding, in the person who has a grasp at the middle. We have already referred to a short aphorism which sums up the content of the insight of those who realize the fruits of the path, like that of a stream-winner, namely, *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*, "whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease".<sup>19</sup>

It does not seem to say anything significant, on the face of it. But it succinctly expresses the plainest conviction a stream-winner gets of the innocent process of arising and ceasing in the world. It is as if the one who had his grasp in the middle lets go of his hold for a while, through the power of the path moment.

It is in the nature of the ordinary worldling to hold on, and to hang on. That is why the man who grasped the cord in the middle refuses to let go of his hold in the midst of windings and unwindings, however much hardship he has to undergo in terms of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. For him, it is extremely difficult to let go. Until a Buddha arises in the world and proclaims the *Dhamma*, the world stubbornly refuses to let go.

Now if one gives up the tendency to grasp, at least for a short while by developing the noble eightfold path at its supramundane level, and lets go even for one moment, then one understands as one grasps again that now there is less stress and tension. Personality view, doubt and dogmatic adherence to rules and observances, *sakāyadiṭṭhi, vicikicchā, sīlabbataparāmāsa*, are gone. An unwinding

has occurred to some extent. The strands of the cord are less taut now.

One also understands, at the moment of arising from that supra-mundane experience, that one comes back to 'existence' because of grasping, because of the tendency to hold on. That this tendency to hold on persists due to influxes and latencies - due to unabandoned defilements - is also evident to him. This, in effect, is the immediate understanding of the law of dependent arising. It seems, then, that we have here in this simile of the cord, a clue to an understanding of the nature of this existence.

Worldlings in general, whether they call themselves Buddhist or non-Buddhist, conceive of existence in terms of a perdurable essence as 'being', somewhat along the lines of the view of heretics. *Nibbāna* is something that drives terror into the worldlings, so long as there is no purification of view. The cessation of existence is much dreaded by them.

Even the commentators, when they get down to defining *Nibbāna*, give a wrong interpretation of the word *dhuva*. They sometimes make use of the word *sassata* in defining *Nibbāna*.<sup>20</sup> This is a word that should never be brought in to explain the term *Nibbāna*. According to them, *Nibbāna* is a permanent and eternal state. Only, you must not ask us, what precisely it is. For, if we are more articulate, we would be betraying our proximity to such views as *Brahma-nirvāna*.

What is the secret behind this anomalous situation? It is the difficulty in interpreting the term *dhuva*, which the Buddha uses as a synonym for *Nibbāna*.<sup>21</sup> The true significance of this synonym has not been understood. It means stable or immovable. Of course, we do come across this term in such contexts as *niccam*, *dhuvaṃ*, *sassataṃ*, *acavanadhammaṃ*,<sup>22</sup> "permanent, stable, eternal, not liable to passing away", when *Brahma* gives expression to his conceit of eternal existence. But that is because these terms are more or less related to each other in sense.

Then, in which sense is *Nibbāna* called *dhuva*? In the sense that the experience of *Nibbāna* is irreversible. That is why it is referred to as *acalaṃ sukhaṃ*,<sup>23</sup> "unshakeable bliss". The term *akuppā cetovimutti*, "unshakeable deliverance of the mind", expresses the same

idea. Sometimes the Buddha refers to *Nibbāna* as *akuppā cetovimutti*.<sup>24</sup> All other such deliverances are shakeable, or irritable. As the expression *kuppapaṭicca santi*, "peace dependent on irritability",<sup>25</sup> implies, they are irritable and shakeable.

Even if they are unshaken during one's life time, they get shaken up at death. The final winning post is the pain of death. That is the critical moment at which one can judge one's own victory or defeat. Before the pain of death, all other deliverances of the mind fall back defeated. But this deliverance, this unshakeable deliverance with its 'let go' strategy at the approach of death, gets never shaken. It is unshakeable. That is why it is called the bliss unshaken, *acalaṃ sukhaṃ*. That is why it is called stable, *dhavaṃ*. It seems, then, that some of the terms used by the Buddha as epithets or synonyms of *Nibbāna* have not been correctly understood.

Sometimes the Buddha employs words, used by heretics, in a different sense. In fact, there are many such instances. Now, if one interprets such instances in the same sense as heretics use those words, it will amount to a distortion of the *Dhamma*. Here, too, we have such an instance. Unfortunately the commentators have used the term *sassata* to define *Nibbāna*, taking it to be something eternal.

The main reason behind this is the misconception regarding existence - that there is an existence in truth and fact. There is this term *asmimāna*, which implies that there is the conceit 'am' in this world. All other religious teachers were concerned with the salvation of a real 'I'. Or, in other words, to confer immortality on this 'I'. The Buddha, on the contrary, declared that what actually 'is' there, is a conceit - the conceit 'am'. All what is necessary is the dispelling of this conceit. That is why we sometimes come across such references to *Nibbāna* as *sammā mānābhisaṃmayā antam akāsi dukkhassa*,<sup>26</sup> "by rightly understanding conceit, he made an end of suffering", or *asmimānasamugghātaṃ pāpuṇāti diṭṭheva dhamme Nibbānaṃ*,<sup>27</sup> "one arrives at the eradication of the conceit 'am' which in itself is the attainment of *Nibbāna* here and now".

Some seem to think that the eradication of the conceit 'am' is one thing, and *Nibbāna* another. But along with the eradication of the conceit 'am', comes extinction. Why? Because one has been winding all this time imagining this to be a real cord or rope. One remains ig-

norant of the true state of affairs, due to one's grasp in the middle. But the moment one lets go, one understands.

It is the insight into this secret that serves as the criterion in designating the *ariyan* according to the number of births he has yet to take in *saṃsāra*. Thus, the stream-winner is called *sattakkhattu-paramo*,<sup>28</sup> 'seven-times-at-the-most'. With the sudden unwinding, which reduces the tension, one understands the secret that the noble eightfold path is the way to unwinding.

One hangs on, because one is afraid to let go. One thinks that to let go is to get destroyed. The Buddha declares that the heaviness of one's burden is due to one's grasping.<sup>29</sup> What accounts for its weight is the very tenacity with which one clings to it. This the worldlings do not understand. So they cling on to the rope, for fear of getting destroyed. But if one lets go of one's hold, even for a moment, one would see that the tensed strands will get relaxed at least for that moment - that there is an immediate unwinding. Full understanding of that unwinding will come when one 'lets-go' completely. Then all influxes and latencies are destroyed.

So this little verse gives us a deep insight into the problem. What is there to lament? Because there are no notions like 'I was' or 'I am'. There is only a destruction of preparations.

The term *vibhava* is used in this context in a different sense. It refers here to the destruction of preparations. When using the two terms *bhava* and *vibhava*, some conceive of *bhava*, or existence, as a real perdurable essence, like a soul, and *vibhava* as its destruction. But here the word *vibhava*, in *vibhavissanti*, refers to the destructions of preparations. There is nothing lamentable about it. In the context of a drama, they are the paraphernalia improvised to stage an act, like the stool and the footstool. When one comes to think of individuals, they are no better than a multitude of puppets manipulated by fetters of existence in accordance with karma.

Even in the delivering of this sermon, there is a trace of a puppet show. The sermon is inspired by the audience. If there is no audience, there is no sermon. We are all enacting a drama. Though for us, this particular act of the drama is so important, there might be similar dramatic acts a few meters away from here in the jungle. A swarm of black ants might be busily hauling away an earthworm reeling in

pain. That is one act in their own drama of life. All our activities are like that.

It is our unawareness of this framework that constitutes ignorance. If at any time one sees this framework of ignorance, free from influxes and latencies, one gets an unobstructed vision of the world. It is as if the doors of the cinema hall are suddenly flung open. The scene on the screen fades away completely then and there, as we have described above.<sup>30</sup> Let us now come to the third verse.

*Suddhaṃ dhammasamuppādaṃ,  
suddhaṃ saṅkhārasantaṭṭhaṃ,  
passantassa yathābhūtaṃ,  
na bhayaṃ hoti gāmaṇi.*<sup>31</sup>

"To one who sees the arising of pure phenomena and the sequence of pure preparations as it is, there is no fear, oh headman". This verse, too, has a depth of meaning, which we shall now try to elucidate.

Why are the phenomena qualified by the word pure, *suddha dhamma*, in this context? Because the mind-objects, which are generally regarded as *dhamma* by the world, are impure. Why are they impure? Because they are 'influenced' by influxes. Now here we have 'uninfluenced' or influx-free phenomena. To the *arahant's* mind the objects of the world occur free of influxes. That is to say, they do not go to build up a prepared, *saṅkhata*. They are quasi-preparations. They do not go to build up a film show.

If, for instance, one who is seeing a film show, has the full awareness of the artificiality of those library-shots which go to depict a tragic scene on the screen, without being carried away by the latency to ignorance, one will not be able to 'enjoy' the film show. In fact, the film show does not exist for him. The film show has 'ceased' for him.

Similarly, the *arahant* sees phenomena as pure phenomena. Those mind-objects arise only to cease, that is all. They are merely a series of preparations, *suddhaṃ saṅkhārasantaṭṭhaṃ*. 'The film reel is just being played' - that is the way it occurs to him. Therefore, "to one who sees all this, there is no fear, oh headman".

Let us try to give an illustration for this, too, by way of an analogy. As we know, when a sewing machine goes into action, it sews

up two folds of cloth together. But supposing suddenly the shuttle runs out of its load of cotton. What happens then? One might even mistake the folds to be actually sewn up, until one discovers that they are separable. This is because the conditions for a perfect stitch are lacking. For a perfect stitch, the shuttle has to hasten and put a knot every time the needle goes down.

Now, for the *arahant*, the shuttle refuses to put in the knot. For him, preparations, or *saṅkhāras*, are ineffective in producing a prepared, or *saṅkhata*. He has no cravings, conceits and views. For knots of existence to occur, there has to be an attachment in the form of craving, a loop in the form of conceit, and a tightening in the form of views. So, then, the *arahant's* mind works like a sewing machine with the shuttle run out of its load of cotton. Though referred to as 'functional consciousness', its function is not to build up a prepared, since it is influx-free. The phenomena merely come up to go down, just like the needle.

Why is ignorance given as the first link in the formula of dependent arising? It is because the entire series is dependent on ignorance. It is not a temporal sequence. It does not involve time. That is why the *Dhamma* is called timeless, *akālika*. It is the stereotype interpretation of the formula of dependent arising in terms of three lives that has undermined the immediate and timeless quality of the *Dhamma*. Since ignorance is the root cause of all other conditions, inclusive of becoming, *bhava*, birth, *jāti*, and decay-and-death, *jarāmaraṇaṃ*, that state of affairs immediately ceases with the cessation of ignorance. This, then, is the reason for the last line, *na bhayaṃ hoti gāmani*, "there is no fear, oh headman".

Deathlessness, *amata*, means the absence of the fear of death. The fear that the world has about death is something obsessional. It is like the obsessional dread aroused by the sight of an anthill due to its association with a cobra.

As a matter of fact, this body has been compared to an anthill in the *Vammikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.<sup>32</sup> This bodily frame, made up of the four elements, procreated by parents and built up with food and drink, is metaphorically conceived as an anthill. The discourse says: "Take the knife, oh wise one, and dig in." The world has the obsession that there is a real cobra of a self inside this anthill.

But once it is dug up, what does one find? One discovers an *arahant*, who has realized selflessness, a selfless cobra, worthy of honour. Of course, this might sound as a post-script on *Vammikasutta*, but the metaphor is so pregnant with meaning, that it can well accommodate this interpretation, too.

The world has a 'perception-of-the-compact', *ghanasaññā*, with regard to this body made up of the four elements. Because of that very perception or notion of compactness, there is a fear of death.

There is birth, because there is existence. Now this might, on analysis, give us an insight into the law of dependent arising. The term *jāti*, or birth, generally calls to mind the form of a child coming out of the mother's womb. But in this context the Buddha uses the term in relation to *bhava*, or existence, which in its turn is related to *upādāna*, or grasping. It is at the time we use something as a footstool that a footstool is 'born'. When it has ceased to serve that purpose, the footstool is 'dead'.

It is in this sense that all assets, *upadhi*, are said to be of a nature to be born, *jātidhammā hete, bhikkhave, upadhayo*,<sup>33</sup> "all these assets, monks, are of the nature to be born". Not only the animate objects, like wife and children, men and women slaves, etc., but even gold and silver are mentioned there as of a nature to be born. Now let us ponder over this statement. How can gold and silver be born? How can they grow old? They are born because of craving, conceit and views. They come into existence. They are born. Because of birth, they grow old. Therefore they become objects for sorrow, lamentation and the like to arise.

For one who looks upon them as pure preparations, all those objects do not crystallize into 'things'. The description of the non-manifestative consciousness in the *Brahmanimantanikasutta* looks like a riddle in the form of a jumble of negative terms like *paṭhavim nāhosim, paṭhaviyā nāhosim, paṭhavito nāhosim*, (etc.), "I did not claim to be earth, I did not claim to be in earth, I did not claim to be from earth".

But what is the general idea conveyed by these expressions? The implication is that the *arahant* looks upon all those concepts, which the worldlings make use of to make up an existence and to assert the reality of this drama of existence, as mere pretensions. He is con-

vinced of their vanity and insubstantiality. As we have already explained with the simile of the sewing machine, an existence does not get stitched up or knitted up. The cessation of existence is experienced then and there.

Some seem to think that the *arahant* experiences the *Nibbānic* bliss only after his death. But the cessation of existence is experienced here and now, *diṭṭheva dhamme*. This is something marvellous and unknown to any other religious system. It is just at the moment that the shuttle of the sewing machine runs out of its load of cotton that the cessation of existence is experienced. It is then that the latencies are uprooted and all influxes are destroyed. Cravings, conceits and views refuse to play their part, with the result that mere preparations come up and go down. This is the ambrosial deathless. It is said that the *arahants* partake of ambrosial deathlessness, *amataṃ paribhuñjanti*.<sup>34</sup>

What actually happened in the case of the Venerable *arahant Adhimutta* was that the bandit chief understood the *Dhamma* and set him free, instead of killing him, and even got ordained under him. But even if he had killed him, Venerable *Adhimutta* would have passed away, experiencing the ambrosial deathless. Why? Because he can let go before *Māra* comes to grab. He is, therefore, fearless. The obsessional fear of death common to worldlings has vanished. This, then, is the ambrosia. It is not some medicine or delicious drink for the possession of which gods and demons battle with each other. It is that bliss of deliverance, the freedom from the fear of death. Needless to say that it requires no seal of ever-lastingness.

As we once pointed out, in tune with the two lines of the following canonical verse, *kiṃ kayirā udapānena, āpā ce sabbadā siyuṃ*,<sup>35</sup> "what is the use of a well, if water is there all the time?", once the thirst is quenched forever, why should one go in search of a well? Let us now take up the next verse.

*Tiṇakaṭṭhasamaṃ lokaṃ,  
yadā paññāya passati,  
mamattaṃ so asaṃvindaṃ,  
'natthi me'ti na socati*.<sup>36</sup>

Now all these verses are eloquent expressions of voidness, *suññatā*. When one sees with wisdom the entire world, that is both the



internal and external world, as comparable to grass and twigs in point of worthlessness, one does not entertain the conceit 'mine' and therefore does not lament, saying: 'Oh, I have nothing'. One is not scared of the term *bhavanirodha*, or cessation of existence. Why? Because all these are worthless things.

Here too, we may add something more by way of explanation, that is as to how things become 'things' in this world - though this may seem obvious enough. Since we have been so concerned with dramas, let us take up a dramatic situation from the world.

A man is hastily walking along a jungle path. Suddenly his foot strikes against a stone. 'Oh, it is so painful!' He kicks the stone with a curse. A few more steps, and another stone trips him. This time it is even more painful. He turns round, quietly, picks up the stone, cleans it carefully, looking around, wraps it up in his handkerchief and slips it into his pocket. Both were stones. But why this special treatment? The first one was a mere pebble, but the second one turned out to be a gem!

The world esteems a gem stone as valuable because of craving, conceits and views. So the first accident was a mishap, but the second - a stroke of luck. Now, had all these mishaps and haps been filmed, it would have become something of a comedy. Everything in our environment, even our precious possessions like gold, silver, pearls, and gems, appear like the paraphernalia improvised for a dramatic performance on the world stage. Once they come on the stage, from backstage, they appear as real things. Not only do they appear as real, relative to the acts of the drama, but they get deposited in our minds as such.

It is such 'deposits' that become our aggregates of grasping, or 'assets', which we take along with us in this *saṃsāra* in the form of likes and dislikes. Loves and hates contracted in the past largely decide our behaviour in the present with some sort of subconscious acquiescence, so much so that we often form attachments and revengeful aversions in accordance with them. When one comes to think of it, there is something dramatic about it. When something serves as a footstool in a particular act, it is 'really' a footstool. When it is improvised to serve as some other thing in the next act, one is unaware of the fact that it is the same object. One is not aware of the hood-

wink involved in it. Such a state of affairs prevails over the nature of preparations, *sañkhāras*.

Being ignorant of the fact that these are purely preparations, the worldlings take concepts too seriously, to come to conclusions such as ‘I was so and so in such and such a birth’, thereby clinging on to all the animate and inanimate objects in the world. They are actually comparable to things temporarily improvised to depict a particular scene in a drama or a film show. That is why we compared the four elements to ghosts.<sup>37</sup> Deluded by their ghostly transfigurations, the worldlings create for themselves a perception of form. The verse in question gives us an insight into this particular aspect of the drama of existence.

A meditator can get at least an inkling of the emptiness and insubstantiality of this drama of existence, when he trains himself in keeping the four postures with mindfulness and full awareness. By practising it, he gets an opportunity to witness a monodrama, free of charge. And this is the drama: When walking, he understands: ‘I am walking’; when standing, he understands: ‘I am standing’; when sitting, he understands: ‘I am sitting’; when lying down, he understands: ‘I am lying down’.<sup>38</sup> While keeping one’s postures in this manner, one sees in outline one’s own form as if one were acting in a monodrama.

When the basis of the factors of the form group is removed, those in the name group are reduced to purposeless activations. Earth, water, fire and air constitute the basis of form. When a meditator becomes dispassionate with regard to these four elements, when they begin to fade away for him, the factors in the name group assume a ghostly character. He feels as if he is performing a drama with non-existing objects. He opens a non-existing door, sits on a non-existing chair, and so on.

Now if we try to understand this in terms of an analogy of a drama, as we have been doing throughout, we may compare it to a mime or a dumb show. In a dumb show, one might see such acts as follows: An actor rides a no-bike, climbs a no-hill, meets a no-friend and has a no-chat with him. Or else he may sit on a no-chair by a no-table and writes a no-letter with a no-pen. What we mean by the nos here is the fact that on the stage there is neither a bicycle, nor a

hill, nor another person, nor any other object like a chair, a table or a pen. All these are merely suggested by his acting. This kind of dumb show has a comic effect on the audience.

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. This amounts to an understanding that the factors of the name group are dependent on the form group, and vice versa.

Seeing the reciprocal relationship between name-and-form, he is disinclined to dabble in concepts or gulp down a dose of prescriptions. If form is dependent on name, and name is dependent on form, both are void of essence. 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. Instead of release there will be entanglement. Such a predicament is not unlikely.

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*  
<sup>4</sup> E.g. at M I 266, *MahāTaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta*.  
<sup>5</sup> M II 45, M II 74, S I 24, S II 254-258, A III 214.  
<sup>6</sup> S II 189-190, *Anamataggasaṃyutta*.  
<sup>7</sup> A IV 100, *Sattasuriyasutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> It 37, *Ajātasutta*.  
<sup>9</sup> Th-a III 12.  
<sup>10</sup> Th 707, *Adhimutta Theragāthā*.  
<sup>11</sup> Th 715, *ibid.*  
<sup>12</sup> Th 716, *ibid.*  
<sup>13</sup> Th 717, *ibid.*  
<sup>14</sup> See sermon 6.  
<sup>15</sup> A II 158, *Cetanāsutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> See sermon 6.  
<sup>17</sup> E.g. at S II 117, *Kosambisutta*.  
<sup>18</sup> M I 140, *Alagaddūpamasutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> See sermon 2.  
<sup>20</sup> E.g. at Dh-p-a III 320 when explaining *accutaṃ ṭhānaṃ* of Dh-p 225.  
<sup>21</sup> S IV 370, *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta*.  
<sup>22</sup> E.g. at M I 326, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> Ud 93, *DutiyaDabbasutta*; Th 264, *Vimala Thera*.  
<sup>24</sup> M I 197, *MahāSāropamasutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> Sn 784, *Duṭṭhaṭṭhakasutta*.  
<sup>26</sup> M I 12, *Sabbāsavasutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> A IV 353, *Sambodhisutta*.  
<sup>28</sup> S II 185, *Puggalasutta*.  
<sup>29</sup> S III 25, *Bhārasutta*.  
<sup>30</sup> See sermon 5.  
<sup>31</sup> Th 716, *Adhimutta Theragāthā*.  
<sup>32</sup> M I 144, *Vammikasutta*.  
<sup>33</sup> M I 162, *Ariyapariyesanasutta*.  
<sup>34</sup> A I 45, *Amatavagga*.  
<sup>35</sup> Ud 79, *Udapānasutta*; see sermon 1.  
<sup>36</sup> Th 717, *Adhimutta Theragāthā*.  
<sup>37</sup> See sermon 1.  
<sup>38</sup> M I 57, *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*.

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

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

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

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

This is the ninth sermon in the series of sermons given on the topic of *Nibbāna*. In our last sermon we discussed, to some extent, how the insubstantiality and the vanity of the comic acts enacted by *saṃsāric* beings in this drama of existence gradually become clear to a meditator as he keeps his postures according to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. We mentioned how the fact that name is only a shadow of form is revealed to the meditator when he is attending to his postures seeing the elements constituting the basis of form as empty.

By way of analogy we brought in the simile of a mime or a dumb show. What characterizes that kind of drama is the comic nature of the acts which depict scenes suggestive of animate or inanimate objects not actually present on the stage. A meditator becomes aware, while attending to his postures, that he is merely enacting a dumb show. He comes to understand how far name is dependent on form, and the four elements appear to him as empty.

In the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* we find the following instruction in regard to the keeping of postures: *Yathā yathā vā paṇ'assa kāyo paṇi-hito hoti tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti*,<sup>2</sup> "in whatever way his body is disposed, so he understands it". This is suggestive of the attempt of a spectator to understand the mimicry of an actor or an actress in a pantomime. While attending to one's postures one feels as if one is watching a one-man dumb show. One gets an opportunity to watch it even more keenly when one comes to the section on full awareness, *sampajaññapabba*, dealing with the minor postures, *khuddaka iriyā-patha*.

The worldlings are in the habit of creating material objects in accordance with the factors on the name side in an extremely subtle manner, by grasping the four elements under the influence of the personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*. The material objects around us are recognized as such by grasping the four elements. The definition of the form aspect in name-and-form points to such a conclusion: *cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya rūpaṃ*,<sup>3</sup> "the four great primaries and form dependent on those four primaries".

The word *upādāya* in this context has a special connotation of relativity. So in this way, material objects are created with the help of factors in the name group. This reveals a certain principle of relativity. In this relativity one sees the emptiness of both name and form. This same principle of relativity is implicit in some other statements of the Buddha, but they are rather neglected for a lack of recognition of their significance. We come across such a discourse with a high degree of importance in the *Salāyatanavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. There the Buddha states that principle of relativity with the help of an illustration:

*Hatthesu, bhikkhave, sati ādānanikkhepanaṃ paññāyati, pādesu sati abhikkamaṭṭikkamo paññāyati, pabbesu sati sammiñjanapasāraṇaṃ paññāyati, kucchismiṃ sati jīghacchā pipāsā paññāyati.*<sup>4</sup> "When there are hands, monks, a taking up and putting down is apparent; when there are feet, a going forward and coming back is apparent; when there are joints, a bending and stretching is apparent; when there is a belly, hunger and thirst is apparent."

Then the contrary of this situation is also given: *Hatthesu, bhikkhave, asati ādānanikkhepanaṃ na paññāyati, pādesu asati abhikkamaṭṭikkamo na paññāyati, pabbesu asati sammiñjanapasāraṇaṃ na paññāyati, kucchismiṃ asati jīghacchā pipāsā na paññāyati.* "When there are no hands, a taking up and putting down is not apparent; when there are no feet, a going forward and coming back is not apparent; when there are no joints, a bending and stretching is not apparent; when there is no belly, hunger and thirst are not apparent." What is implied by all this is that basic principle of relativity.

Some meditators, engaged in *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, might think that materiality does not really exist and only mentality is there. In other words, there are no hands, only a taking up and putting down is

there. There are no feet, only a going and coming is there. That way, they might dogmatically take the bare activity as real and subject it to an analysis. But what is important here is the understanding of the relativity between the two, which reveals the emptiness of both. If, on the other hand, one of them is taken too seriously as real, it ends up in a dogmatic standpoint. It will not lead to a deeper understanding of the emptiness of name and form.

Now in the case of a pantomime, as already mentioned, a spectator has to imagine persons and things not found on the stage as if they are present, in order to make sense out of an act. Here too we have a similar situation. Name and form exist in relation to each other. What one sees through this interrelation is the emptiness or insubstantiality of both.

We brought up all these analogies of dramas and film shows just to give an idea of the impermanence of *saṅkhāras*, or preparations. In fact, the term *saṅkhāra*, is very apt in the context of dramas and film shows. It is suggestive of a pretence sustained with some sort of effort. It clearly brings out their false and unreal nature.

The purpose of the perception of impermanence, with regard to this drama of existence, is the dispelling of the perception of permanence about the things that go to make up the drama. With the dispelling of the perception of permanence, the tendency to grasp a sign or catch a theme is removed. It is due to the perception of permanence that one grasps a sign in accordance with perceptual data. When one neither takes a sign nor gets carried away by its details, there is no aspiration, expectation, or objective by way of craving. When there is no aspiration, one cannot see any purpose or essence to aim at.

It is through the three deliverances, the signless, the desireless, and the void, that the drama of existence comes to an end. The perception of impermanence is the main contributory factor for the cessation of this drama. Some of the discourses of the Buddha, concerning the destruction of the world, can be cited as object lessons in the development of the perception of impermanence leading to the signless deliverance.

For instance, in the discourse on the appearance of the seven suns, *Sattasuriyasutta*, mentioned earlier,<sup>5</sup> this world system, which is so

full of valuable things like the seven kinds of jewels, gets fully consumed in a holocaust leaving not even a trace of ash or soot, as if some ghee or oil has been burned up. The perception of impermanence, arising out of this description, automatically leads to an understanding of voidness.

If the conviction that not only the various actors and actresses on the world stage, but all the accompanying decorations get fully destroyed together with the stage itself at some point of time grips the mind with sufficient intensity to exhaust the influxes of sensuality, existence and ignorance, emancipation will occur then and there. That may be the reason why some attained *arahant*-hood immediately on listening to that sermon.<sup>6</sup> That way, the perception of impermanence acts as an extremely powerful antidote for defilements.

*Aniccasaññā, bhikkhave, bhāvītā bahulīkatā sabbam kāmārāgam pariyaḍiyati, sabbam rūparāgam pariyaḍiyati, sabbam bhavarāgam pariyaḍiyati, sabbam aviḍḍam pariyaḍiyati, sabbam asmimānam pariyaḍiyati samūhanati.*<sup>7</sup> "Monks, the perception of impermanence, when developed and intensively practised, exhausts all attachments to sensuality, exhausts all attachments to form, exhausts all attachments to existence, exhausts all ignorance, exhausts all conceits of an 'am' and eradicates it completely."

This shows that the perception of impermanence gradually leads to an understanding of voidness, as is clearly stated in the following quotation: *Aniccasaññīno, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno anattasaññā saññhāti. Anattasaññī asmimānasamugghātam pāpuṇāti diṭṭheva dhamme nibbānam.*<sup>8</sup> "Monks, in one who has the perception of impermanence, the perception of not-self gets established. With the perception of not-self, he arrives at the destruction of the conceit 'am', which is extinction here and now".

Such an assessment of the importance of the perception of impermanence will enable us to make sense out of the seemingly contradictory statements in some of the verses in the *Dhammapada*, such as the following:

*Puttā matthi dhanam matthi,  
iti bālo vihaññati,  
attā hi attano natthi,  
kuto puttā kuto dhanam?*<sup>9</sup>



"Sons I have, wealth I have,  
So the fool is vexed,  
Even oneself is not one's self,  
Where then are sons, where is wealth?"

The perception of not-self at its highest, gives rise to the idea of voidness, as implied by the dictum *suññam idaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā*,<sup>10</sup> "this is empty of self or anything belonging to a self".

Some are afraid of this term *suññatā*, emptiness, voidness, for various reasons. That is why we mentioned at the very outset, already in the first sermon, that gradually the monks themselves showed a lack of interest in those discourses that deal with the idea of voidness.<sup>11</sup> The Buddha had already predicted, as a danger that will befall the *Sāsana* in the future, this lack of regard for such discourses. This prediction reveals the high degree of importance attached to them.

The last two sections of the *Sutta Nipāta*, namely *Aṭṭhakavagga* and *Pārāyanavagga*, abound in extremely deep sermons. In the *Pārāyanavagga*, for instance, we find the *Brahmin* youth *Mogharāja* putting the following question to the Buddha: *Kathaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ, maccurājā na passati?*<sup>12</sup> "By looking upon the world in which manner can one escape the eye of the king of death?" The Buddha gives the answer in the following verse:

*Suññato lokaṃ avekkhassu,  
Mogharāja sadā sato,  
attānudiṭṭhim ūhacca,  
evaṃ maccutaro siyā,  
evaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ,  
maccurājā na passati.*<sup>13</sup>

"Look upon the world as void,  
*Mogharāja*, being mindful at all times,  
Uprooting the lingering view of self,  
Get well beyond the range of death,  
Him who thus looks upon the world,  
The king of death gets no chance to see."

From this we can infer that the entire *Dhamma*, even like the world system itself, inclines towards voidness. This fact is borne out by the following significant quotation in the *CūḷaTaṇhāsāṅkhayasut-*

ta, cited by *Sakka* as an aphorism given by the Buddha himself: *Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*.<sup>14</sup> Though we may render it simply as "nothing is worth clinging on to", it has a deeper significance. The word *abhinivesa* is closely associated with the idea of entering into or getting entangled in views of one's own creation. The implication, then, is that not only the views as such, but nothing at all is worthwhile getting entangled in. This is suggestive of the emptiness of everything.

This brings us to a very important *sutta* among the Eighths of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, namely the *Kimūlakasutta*. In this particular *sutta* we find the Buddha asking the monks how they would answer a set of questions which wandering ascetics of other sects might put to them. The questions are as follows:

*Kiṃ mūlakā, āvuso, sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ sambhavā sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ samudayā sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ samosaraṇā sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ pamukhā sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ adhipateyyā sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ uttarā sabbe dhammā? Kiṃ sārā sabbe dhammā?*<sup>15</sup> "What is the root of all things? What is the origin of all things? Where do all things arise? Towards what do all things converge? What is at the head of all things? What dominates all things? What is the point of transcendence of all things? What is the essence of all things?"

The monks confessed that they are unable to answer those questions on their own and begged the Buddha to instruct them. Then the Buddha gave the exact answer to each question in a cut and dried form, saying, "This is the way you should answer if wandering ascetics of other sects raise those questions".

*Chandamūlakā, āvuso, sabbe dhammā, manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā, phassasamudayā sabbe dhammā, vedanāsamosaraṇā sabbe dhammā, samādhipamukhā sabbe dhammā, satādhipateyyā sabbe dhammā, paññuttarā sabbe dhammā, vimuttisārā sabbe dhammā.* "Rooted in desire, friends, are all things. Born of attention are all things. Arisen from contact are all things. Converging on feeling 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."

Before getting down to an analysis of the basic meaning of this discourse, it is worthwhile considering why the Buddha forestalled a

possible perplexity among his disciples in the face of a barrage of questions likely to be levelled by other sectarians. Why did he think it fit to prepare the minds of the disciples well in advance of such a situation?

Contemporary ascetics of other sects, notably the *brahmins*, entertained various views regarding the origin and purpose of 'all things'. Those who subscribed to a soul theory, had different answers to questions concerning thing-hood or the essence of a thing. Presumably it was not easy for the monks, with their not-self standpoint, to answer those questions to the satisfaction of other sectarians. That is why those monks confessed their incompetence and begged for guidance.

It was easy for those of other sects to explain away the questions relating to the origin and purpose of things on the basis of their soul theory or divine creation. Everything came out of *Brahma*, and self is the essence of everything. No doubt, such answers were substantial enough to gain acceptance. Even modern philosophers are confronted with the intricate problem of determining the exact criterion of a 'thing'. What precisely accounts for the thing-hood of a thing? What makes it no-thing?

Unfortunately for the *sutta*, its traditional commentators seem to have ignored the deeper philosophical dimensions of the above questionnaire. They have narrowed down the meaning of the set of answers recommended by the Buddha by limiting its application to wholesome mental states.<sup>16</sup> The occurrence of such terms as *chanda*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, had probably led them to believe that the entire questionnaire is on the subject of wholesome mental states. But this is a serious underestimation of the import of the entire discourse. It actually goes far deeper in laying bare a basic principle governing both skilful and unskilful mental states.

Now, for instance, the first two verses of the *Dhammapada* bring out a fundamental law of psychology applicable to things both skilful and unskilful: *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*.<sup>17</sup> Both verses draw upon this fundamental principle. Nowadays, these two lines are variously interpreted, but the basic idea expressed is that "all things have mind as their forerunner, mind is their chief, and

they are mind-made". This applies to both skilful and unskilful mental states.

Now the *sutta* in question has also to be interpreted in the same light, taking into account both these aspects. It must be mentioned, in particular, that with the passage of time a certain line of interpretation gained currency, according to which such terms as *chanda* were taken as skilful in an exclusive sense. For instance, the term *sati*, wherever and whenever it occurred, was taken to refer to *sammā sati*.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, *chanda* came to be interpreted as *kusalacchanda*, desire or interest in the skilful, or *kattukamyatāchanda*, desire to perform.<sup>19</sup>

But we have to reckon with a special trait in the Buddha's way of preaching. His sermons were designed to lead onward the listeners, gradually, according to their degree of understanding. Sometimes the meaning of a term, as it occurs at the end of a sermon, is different from the meaning it is supposed to have at the beginning of the sermon. Such a technique is also evident.

The term *chanda* is one that has both good and bad connotations. In such contexts as *chandarāga*<sup>20</sup> and *chandajaṃ aghaṃ*,<sup>21</sup> it is suggestive of craving as the cause of all suffering in this world. It refers to that attachment, *rāga*, which the world identifies with craving as such. But in the context *chanda-iddhipāda*,<sup>22</sup> where the reference is to a particular base for success, it is reckoned as a skilful mental state. However, that is not a sufficient reason to regard it as something alien to the generic sense of the term.

There is an important *sutta*, which clearly reveals this fact, in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. A *brahmin* named *Uṇṇābha* once came to Venerable *Ānanda* with a question that has a relevance to the significance of the term *chanda*. His question was: *Kim atthiyaṃ nu kho, bho Ānanda, samaṇe Gotame brahmacariyaṃ vussati?*<sup>23</sup> "Sir *Ānanda*, what is the purpose for which the holy life is lived under the recluse *Gotama*?" Venerable *Ānanda* promptly gives the following answer: *Chandappahānatthaṃ kho, brāhmaṇa, bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ vussati. "Brahmin, it is for the abandonment of desire that the holy life is lived under the Exalted One."* Then the *brahmin* asks: *Atthi pana, bho Ānanda, maggo atthi paṭipadā etassa chandassa pahānāya?* "Is there, sir *Ānanda*, a way or practice for the abandonment

of this desire?" Venerable *Ānanda* says: "Yes". Now, what is the way he mentions in that context? It is none other than the four bases for success, *iddhipāda*, which are described as follows:

*Chandasamādhipadhānasaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti, viriyasamādhipadhānasaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti, cittasamādhipadhānasaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti, vīmaṃsāsamādhipadhānasaṅkhārasamannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti.* (1) "One develops the basis for success that has volitional preparations leading to a concentration through desire", (2) "one develops the basis for success that has volitional preparations leading to a concentration through energy", (3) "one develops the basis for success that has volitional preparations leading to a concentration by making up the mind", (4) "one develops the basis for success that has volitional preparations leading to a concentration through investigation".

Venerable *Ānanda* replies that the way of practice to be followed for the abandonment of desire is the above mentioned four bases pertaining to desire, energy, mind and investigation. The *brahmin* is puzzled at this reply. He thinks, if that is so, desire is not abandoned. It is still there. And he raises this objection to show that there is an implicit contradiction: *Chandeneva chandaṃ pajahissatī'ti, netam thānaṃ vijjati*, "that one abandons desire by desire itself is an impossibility". Then the Venerable *Ānanda* brings out a simile to convince the *brahmin* of the implicit truth in his reply.

"What do you think, *brahmin*, is it not the case that you earlier had the desire 'I will go to the park', and after you came here, the appropriate desire subsided?" So this is the logic behind the statement concerning the abandonment of craving. The term *chanda* is used here in the first instance with reference to that type of craving for the purpose of the abandonment of craving.

Desire as a basis for success is developed for the very abandonment of desire. So there is no question about the use of the same word. Here, *chanda* as a base of success still belongs to the *chanda*-family. A desire should be there even for the abandonment of desire. This is a distinctive basic principle underlying the middle path.

Some have a great liking for the word *chanda*, but dislike the word *taṇhā*. So much so that, if one speaks of a craving for attaining

*Nibbāna*, it might even be regarded as a blasphemy. In another sermon given by Venerable *Ānanda* himself, one addressed to a particular sick nun, we find the statement: *Taṇhaṃ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā*,<sup>24</sup> "depending on craving one should abandon craving". That again is suggestive of a special application of the middle path technique. But the kind of craving meant here is not something crude. It is specifically explained there that it is the longing arising in one for the attainment of *arahant*-hood on hearing that someone has already attained it. Of course, there is a subtle trace of craving even in that longing, but it is one that is helpful for the abandonment of craving. So one need not fight shy of the implications of these words.

As a matter of fact, even the word *rati*, attachment, is used with reference to *Nibbāna*. When, for instance, it is said that the disciple of the Buddha is attached to the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-rato hoti sammāsambuddhasāvako*,<sup>25</sup> it may sound rather odd, because the word *rati* usually stands for lust. However, according to the Middle Path principle of utilizing one thing to eliminate another, words like *chanda* and *taṇhā* are used with discretion. Sometimes terms like *nekkhamasita domanassa*,<sup>26</sup> unhappiness based on renunciation, are employed to indicate the desire for attaining *Nibbāna*. Therefore the statement *chandamūlakā sabbe dhammā* need not be interpreted as referring exclusively to skilful mental states.

With regard to the significance of *sati* and *samādhi*, too, we may mention in passing, that terms like *micchā sati*, wrong mindfulness, and *micchā samādhi*, wrong concentration, do sometimes occur in the discourses.<sup>27</sup> So let us examine whether the set of statements under consideration has any sequential coherence or depth.

"Rooted in desire, friends, are all things." We might as well bring out the meaning of these statements with the help of an illustration. Supposing there is a heap of rubbish and someone approaches it with a basket to collect it and throw it away. Now, about the rubbish heap, he has just a unitary notion. That is to say, he takes it as just one heap of rubbish. But as he bends down and starts collecting it into the basket, he suddenly catches sight of a gem. Now the gem becomes the object of his desire and interest. A gem arose out of what earlier appeared as a rubbish heap. It became the thing for him, and desire was

at the root of this phenomenon - true to the dictum "rooted in desire, friends, are all things".

Then what about origination through attention? It is through attention that the gem came into being. One might think that the origin of the gem should be traced to the mine or to some place where it took shape, but the Buddha traces its origin in accordance with the norm *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*, "mind is the forerunner of all things". So then, the root is desire and the source of origin is attention, the very fact of attending.

*Phassasamudayā sabbe dhammā*, "all things arise from contact". There was eye-contact with the gem as something special out of all the things in the rubbish heap. So the gem 'arose' from eye-contact. *Vedanāsamōsaraṇā sabbe dhammā*, "all things converge on feeling". As soon as the eye spotted the gem, a lot of pleasant feelings about it arose in the mind. Therefore, all things converge on feeling.

*Samādhipamukhā sabbe dhammā*, "headed by concentration are all things". Here, in this case, it may be wrong concentration, *micchā samādhi*, but all the same it is some kind of concentration. It is now a concentration on the gem. It is as if his meditation has shifted from the rubbish heap to the gem. *Satādhipateyyā sabbe dhammā*, "dominated by mindfulness are all things". As to this dominance, undistracted attention is necessary for the maintenance of that thing which has now been singled out. Where there is distraction, attention is drawn to other things as well. That is why mindfulness is said to be dominant. Be it the so-called wrong mindfulness, but nonetheless, it is now directed towards the gem.

Now comes the decisive stage, that is, the 'surmountability by wisdom', *paññuttarā*. Let us for a moment grant that somehow or other, even though wrongly, *micchā*, some kind of surrogate mindfulness and concentration has developed out of this situation. Now, if one wants to cross over in accordance with the *Dhamma*, that is, if one wants to attain *Nibbāna* with this gem itself as the topic of meditation, one has to follow the hint given by the statement *paññuttarā sabbe dhammā*, "surmountable by wisdom are all things".

What one has to do now is to see through the gem, to penetrate it, by viewing it as impermanent, fraught with suffering, and not-self, thereby arriving at the conviction that, after all, the gem belongs to

the rubbish heap itself. The gem is transcended by the wisdom that it is just one item in this rubbish heap that is 'The world' in its entirety. If one wins to the wisdom that this gem is something like a piece of charcoal, to be destroyed in the holocaust at the end of a world period, one has transcended that gem.

So then, the essence of all things is not any self or soul, as postulated by the *brahmins*. Deliverance is the essence. In such discourses as the *Mahāsāropamasutta*, the essence of this entire *Dhamma* is said to be deliverance.<sup>28</sup> The very emancipation from all this, to be rid of all this, is itself the essence. Some seem to think that the essence is a heaping up of concepts and clinging to them. But that is not the essence of this teaching. It is the ability to penetrate all concepts, thereby transcending them. The deliverance resulting from transcendence is itself the essence.

With the cessation of that concept of a gem as some special thing, a valuable thing, separate from the rest of the world, as well as of the ensuing heap of concepts by way of craving, conceit and views, the gem ceases to exist. That itself is the deliverance. It is the emancipation from the gem. Therefore, *vimuttisārā sabbe dhammā*, "deliverance is the essence of all things".

So then, we have here a very valuable discourse which can even be used as a topic of insight meditation. The essence of any mind object is the very emancipation from it, by seeing it with wisdom. Considered in this light, everything in the world is a meditation object. That is why we find very strange meditation topics mentioned in connection with the attainments of ancient *arahant* monks and nuns. Sometimes, even apparently unsuitable meditation objects have been successfully employed.

Meditation teachers, as a rule, do not approve of certain meditation objects for beginners, with good reasons. For instance, they would not recommend a female form as a meditation object for a male, and a male form for a female. That is because it can arouse lust, since it is mentioned in the *Theragāthā* that lust arose in some monk even on seeing a decayed female corpse in a cemetery.<sup>29</sup> But in the same text one comes across an episode in connection with Venerable *Nāgasamāla*, which stands in utter contrast to it.



Venerable *Nāgasamāla* attained *arahant*-hood with the help of a potentially pernicious meditation object, as he describes it, in his words: "Once, on my begging round, I happened to look up to see a dancing woman, beautifully dressed and bedecked, dancing to the rhythm of an orchestra just on the middle of the highway."<sup>30</sup> And, what happened then?

*Tato me manasikāro,  
yoniso udapajjatha,  
ādīnavo pāturahu,  
nibbidā samatiṭṭhatha,  
tato cittaṃ vimucchi me,  
passa dhammasudhammataṃ.*<sup>31</sup>

"Just then, radical attention  
Arose from within me,  
The perils were manifest,  
And dejection took place,  
Then my mind got released,  
Behold the goodness of the Norm."

If one wishes to discover the goodness of this norm, one has to interpret the *sutta* in question in a broader perspective, without limiting its application to skilful mental states. If a train of thoughts had got started up about that gem, even through a wrong concentration, and thereby a wrong mindfulness and a wrong concentration had taken shape, at whatever moment radical attention comes on the scene, complete reorientation occurs instantaneously, true to those qualities of the *Dhamma* implied by the terms, *sandiṭṭhika*, visible here and now, *akālika*, not involving time, and *ehipassika*, inviting one to come and see.

Some might wonder, for instance, how those *brahmins* of old who had practiced their own methods of concentration, attained *arahant*-hood on hearing just one stanza as soon as they came to the Buddha.<sup>32</sup> The usual interpretation is that it is due to the miraculous powers of the Buddha, or else that the persons concerned had an extraordinary stock of merit. The miracle of the *Dhamma*, implicit in such occurrences, is often ignored.

Now as to this miracle of the *Dhamma*, we may take the case of someone keen on seeing a rainbow. He will have to go on looking at

the sky indefinitely, waiting for a rainbow to appear. But if he is wise enough, he can see the spectrum of rainbow colours through a dew-drop hanging on a leaf of a creeper waving in the morning sun, provided he finds the correct perspective. For him, the dewdrop itself is the meditation object. In the same way, one can sometimes see the entire *Dhamma*, thirty-seven factors of enlightenment and the like, even in a potentially pernicious meditation object.

From an academic point of view, the two terms *yoniso manasikāra*, radical attention, and *ayoniso manasikāra*, non-radical attention, are in utter contrast to each other. There is a world of difference between them. So also between the terms *sammā diṭṭhi*, right view, and *micchā diṭṭhi*, wrong view. But from the point of view of realization, there is just a little difference.

Now as we know, that spectrum of the sun's rays in the dewdrop disappears with a very little shift in one's perspective. It appears only when viewed in a particular perspective. What we find in this *Dhamma* is something similar. This is the intrinsic nature of this *Dhamma* that is to be seen here and now, timeless, leading onward, and realizable by the wise each one by himself.

Our interpretation of this *sutta*, taking the word *sabbe dhammā* to mean 'all things', is further substantiated by the *Samiddhi Sutta* found in the section on the Nines in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. It is a discourse preached by Venerable *Sāriputta*. To a great extent, it runs parallel to the one we have already analysed. The difference lies only in a few details. In that *sutta* we find Venerable *Samiddhi* answering the questions put to him by Venerable *Sāriputta*, like a pupil at a catechism. The following is the gist of questions raised and answers given:

'*Kim ārammaṇā, Samiddhi, purisassa saṅkappavitakkā uppajjan-tī'ti?* - '*Nāmarūpārammaṇā, bhante.*'

'*Te pana, Samiddhi, kva nānattaṃ gaacchantī'ti?* - '*Dhātūsu, bhante.*'

'*Te pana, Samiddhi, kiṃ samudayā'ti?* - '*Phassasamudayā, bhante.*'

'*Te pana, Samiddhi, kiṃ samosaraṇā'ti?* - '*Vedanāsamosaraṇā, bhante.*'

‘*Te pana, Samiddhi, kiṃ pamukhā’ti?* - ‘*Samādhipamukhā, bhante.*’

‘*Te pana, Samiddhi, kim adhipateyyā’ti?* - ‘*Satādhipateyyā, bhante.*’

‘*Te pana, Samiddhi, kim uttarā’ti?* - ‘*Paññuttarā, bhante.*’

‘*Te pana, Samiddhi kiṃ sārā’ti?* - ‘*Vimuttisārā, bhante.*’

‘*Te pana, Samiddhi, kim ogadhā’ti?* - ‘*Amatogadhā, bhante.*’<sup>33</sup>

Except for the first two questions and the last one, the rest is the same as in the questionnaire given by the Buddha. But from this catechism it is extremely clear that Venerable *Sāriputta* is asking about thoughts and concepts. In the case of the previous *sutta*, one could sometimes doubt whether the word *sabbe dhammā* referred to skilful or unskilful mental states. But here it is clear enough that Venerable *Sāriputta*’s questions are on thoughts and concepts. Let us now try to translate the above catechism.

"With what as object, *Samiddhi*, do concepts and thoughts arise in a man?" - "With name-and-form as object, venerable sir."

"But where, *Samiddhi*, do they assume diversity?" - "In the elements, venerable sir."

"But from what, *Samiddhi*, do they arise?" - "They arise from contact, venerable sir."

"But on what, *Samiddhi*, do they converge?" - "They converge on feeling, venerable sir."

"But what, *Samiddhi*, is at their head?" - "They are headed by concentration, venerable sir."

"But by what, *Samiddhi*, are they dominated?" - "They are dominated by mindfulness, venerable sir."

"But what, *Samiddhi*, is their highest point?" - "Wisdom is their highest point, venerable sir."

"But what, *Samiddhi*, is their essence?" - "Deliverance is their essence, venerable sir."

"But in what, *Samiddhi*, do they get merged?" - "They get merged in the deathless, venerable sir."

Some noteworthy points emerge from this catechism. All concepts and thoughts have name-and-form as their object. The eighteen elements account for their diversity. They arise with contact. They converge on feeling. They are headed by concentration. They are

dominated by mindfulness. Their acme or point of transcendence is wisdom. Their essence is deliverance and they get merged in the deathless. Be it noted that the deathless is a term for *Nibbāna*. Therefore, as we have stated above, everything has the potentiality to yield the deathless, provided radical attention is ushered in.

It is indubitably clear, from this catechism, that the subject under consideration is concepts and thoughts. All mind objects partake of the character of concepts and thoughts. Therefore the mind objects, according to the Buddha, have to be evaluated on the lines of the above mentioned normative principles, and not on the lines of self essence and divine creation as postulated by soul theories.

In accordance with the dictum 'mind is the forerunner of all things', *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*,<sup>34</sup> the course of training advocated by the Buddha, which begins with name-and-form as object, reaches its consummation in seeing through name-and-form, that is, in its penetration. It culminates in the transcendence of name-and-form, by penetrating into its impermanent, suffering-fraught, and not-self nature. This fact is borne out by the discourses already quoted.

The essence of the teaching is release from name-and-form. When one rightly understands the relation between name and form as well as their emptiness, one is able to see through name-and-form. This penetration is the function of wisdom. So long as wisdom is lacking, consciousness has a tendency to get entangled in name-and-form. This is the insinuation of the following *Dhammapada* verse about the *arahant*:

*Kodhaṃ jahe vippajaheyya mānaṃ,  
saṃyojanaṃ sabbam atikkameyya,  
taṃ nāmarūpasmim asaḍḍamānaṃ,  
akiñcanaṃ nānupatanti dukkhā.*<sup>35</sup>

"Let one put wrath away, conceit abandon,  
And get well beyond all fetters as well,  
That one, untrammelled by name-and-form,  
With naught as his own - no pains befall."

The path shown by the Buddha, then, is one that leads to the transcendence of name-and-form by understanding its emptiness. In this connection, the *Brahmajālasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* reveals a very

important fact on analysis.<sup>36</sup> What it portrays is how the sixty-two wrong views lose their lustre in the light of wisdom emanating from the non-manifestative consciousness of the Buddha, which is lustrous on all sides, *sabbato pabha*.<sup>37</sup>

As to how a lustre could be superseded, we have already explained with reference to a film show.<sup>38</sup> The film show lost its lustre when the doors were flung open. The narrow beam of light, directed on the cinema screen, faded away completely before the greater light now coming from outside. Similarly, the sixty-two wrong views in the *Brahmajālasutta* are seen to fade away before the light of wisdom coming from the non-manifestative consciousness of the Buddha. The narrow beams of sixty-two wrong views faded in the broader flood of light that is wisdom.

Those heretics who propounded those wrong views, conceived them by dogmatically holding on to name-and-form. They got entangled in name-and-form, and those views were the product of speculative logic based on it. We come across an allusion to this fact in the *MahāViyūhasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. There it is declared that those of other sects are not free from the limitations of name-and-form.

*Passaṃ naro dakkhiti nāmarūpaṃ,  
disvāna vā ñassati tānim eva,  
kāmaṃ bahuṃ passatu appakaṃ vā,  
na hi tena suddhiṃ kusalā vadanti.*<sup>39</sup>

"A seeing man will see only name-and-form,  
Having seen he will know just those constituents alone,  
Let him see much or little,  
Experts do not concede purity thereby."

In the *Brahmajālasutta* itself we find some views advanced by those who had higher knowledges. With the help of those higher knowledges, which were still of the mundane type, they would see into their past, sometimes hundreds of thousands of their past lives, and drawing also from their ability to read others' minds, they would construct various views. Many such views are recorded in the *Brahmajālasutta*, only to be rejected and invalidated. Why so? The reason is given here in this verse.

The man who claims to see with those higher knowledges is seeing only name-and-form, *passaṃ naro dakkhiti nāmarūpaṃ*. Having

seen, he takes whatever he sees as real knowledge, *disvāna vā nāsati tānim eva*. Just as someone inside a closed room with tinted window panes sees only what is reflected on those dark panes, and not beyond, even so, those 'seers' got enmeshed in name-and-form when they proceeded to speculate on what they saw as their past lives. They took name-and-form itself to be real. That is why the Buddha declared that whether they saw much or little, it is of no use, since experts do not attribute purity to that kind of vision, *kāmaṃ bahuṃ passatu appakaṃ vā, na hi tena suddhiṃ kusalā vadanti*.

Here it is clear enough that those narrow wrong views are based on name-and-form, assuming it to be something real. The Buddha's vision, on the other hand, is one that transcends name-and-form. It is a supramundane vision. This fact is clearly revealed by the implications of the very title of the *Brahmajālasutta*. At the end of the discourse, the Buddha himself compares it to an all-embracing super-net.<sup>40</sup> Just as a clever fisherman would throw a finely woven net well over a small lake, so that all the creatures living there are caught in it as they come up, all the possible views in the world are enmeshed or forestalled by this super-net, or *brahmajāla*.

Let us now pause to consider what the mesh of this net could be. If the *Brahmajālasutta* is a net, what constitutes that fine mesh in this net? There is a word occurring all over the discourse, which gives us a clear answer to this question. It is found in the phrase which the Buddha uses to disqualify every one of those views, namely, *tadapi phassapaccayā, tadapi phassapaccayā*,<sup>41</sup> "and that too is due to contact, and that too is due to contact". So from this we can see that contact is the mesh of this net.

The medley of wrong views, current among those of other sects, is the product of the six sense-bases dependent on contact. The Buddha's vision, on the other hand, seems to be an all-encompassing lustre of wisdom, born of the cessation of the six sense-bases, which in effect, is the vision of *Nibbāna*. This fact is further clarified in the *sutta* by the statement of the Buddha that those who cling to those wrong views, based on name-and-form, keep on whirling within the *saṃsāric* round because of those very views.

*Sabbe te चाहि phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṃvedenti, te-saṃ phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā*

*upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmarāṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti. Yato kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu, channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaraṇañca yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ imehi sabbeheva uttaritaraṃ pajānāti.*<sup>42</sup>

"They all continue to experience feeling coming into contact again and again with the six sense-bases, and to them dependent on contact there is feeling, dependent on feeling there is craving, dependent on craving there is grasping, dependent on grasping there is becoming, dependent on becoming there is birth, and dependent on birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. But when, monks, a monk knows, as they truly are, the arising, the going down, the satisfaction, the peril and the stepping out concerning the six sense-bases, that monk has a knowledge which is far superior to that of all those dogmatists."

This paragraph clearly brings out the distinction between those who held on to such speculative views and the one who wins to the vision made known by the Buddha. The former were dependent on contact, that is, sensory contact, even if they possessed worldly higher knowledges. Because of contact originating from the six sense-bases there is feeling. Because of feeling they are lured into craving and grasping which make them go round and round in *saṃsāra*.

The emancipated monk who keeps to the right path, on the other hand, wins to that synoptic vision of the six sense-bases, replete in its five aspects. That is what is known as the light of wisdom. To him, all five aspects of the six sense-bases become clear, namely the arising, the going down, the satisfaction, the peril and the stepping out. That light of wisdom is considered the highest knowledge, precisely because it reveals all these five aspects of the six sense-bases.

The reference to the formula of dependent arising in the above passage is highly significant. It is clear proof of the fact that the law of dependent arising is not something to be explained with reference to a past existence. It is a law relevant to the present moment.

This name-and-form is reflected on consciousness. Now as to this consciousness, the *Nidānaśaṃyutta* of the *Śaṃyutta Nikāya*, which is

a section dealing with the law of dependent arising in particular, defines it in a way that includes all the six types of consciousness.

*Katamañca, bhikkhave, viññāṇaṃ? Chayime, bhikkhave, viññāṇa-kāyā - cakkhaviññāṇaṃ, sotaviññāṇaṃ, ghānaviññāṇaṃ, jivhāviññāṇaṃ, kāyaviññāṇaṃ, manoviññāṇaṃ, idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, viññāṇaṃ.*<sup>43</sup> "And what, monks, is consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness - eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness; this, monks, is called consciousness."

This shows that the consciousness mentioned in the formula of dependent arising is not something like a re-linking consciousness. The reference here is not to just one consciousness. It is in dependence on name-and-form, reflected on all six types of consciousness, that the six sense-bases get established.

The discrimination between an 'internal' and an 'external' is the outcome of the inability to penetrate name-and-form, to see through it. There is an apparent duality: I, as one who sees, and name-and-form, as the objects seen. Between them there is a dichotomy as internal and external. It is on this very dichotomy that the six sense-bases are 'based'. Feeling and all the rest of it come on top of those six sense-bases. Craving and grasping follow suit, as a result of which those dogmatists get caught up in the vicious cycle of dependent arising and keep running round in *samsāra* as the Buddha has declared.

So then, it becomes clear from the *Brahmajālasutta* that such a wide variety of wrong views exist in this world due to the dogmatic involvement in name-and-form reflected on consciousness, that is by mis-taking the reflection to be one's self. This, in brief, is tantamount to *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, or personality view.

Now let us take up a parable by way of an illustration of the distinction between the wrong view of the dogmatists, already analysed, and the right view, which is in complete contrast to it. It is an episode in the *Ummaggajātaka* which more or less looks like a parable to illustrate this point.<sup>44</sup> In the *Ummaggajātaka* one comes across the problem of a gem. In that story there are in fact several such problems concerning gems, and we are taking up just one of them.



The citizens of *Mithilā* came and informed king *Videha* that there is a gem in the pond near the city gate. The king commissioned his royal adviser *Senaka* with the task of taking out the gem. He went and got the people to empty the pond but failed to find the gem there. Even the mud was taken out and the earth dug up in a vain attempt to locate the gem. When he confessed his failure to the king, the latter entrusted the job to *bodhisatta Mahosadha*, the youngest adviser. When he went there and had a look around, he immediately understood that the gem is actually in a crow's nest on a palm tree near the pond. What appeared in the pond is only its reflection. He convinced the king of this fact by getting a man to immerse a bowl of water into the pond, which also reflected the gem. Then the man climbed up the palm tree and found the gem there, as predicted by *Mahosadha*.

If we take this episode as an illustration, the view of the dogmatists can be compared to *Senaka's* view. The discovery of the Buddha that name-and-form is a mere reflection is like the solution advanced by *bodhisatta Mahosadha* to the problem of the gem in the pond.

Now what is the role of personality view in this connection? It is said that the Buddha preached the *Dhamma* adopting a via media between two extreme views. What are they? The eternalist view and the nihilist view. The eternalist view is like that attachment to the reflection. Sometimes, when one sees one's own image in water, one falls in love with it, imagining it to be someone else, as in the case of the dog on the plank mentioned in an earlier sermon.<sup>45</sup> It can sometimes arouse hate as well. Thus there could be both self-love and self-hate.

Inclining towards these two attitudes, the personality view itself leads to the two extreme views known as eternalism and nihilism, or annihilationism. It is like *Senaka's* attempt to find the gem by emptying the water and digging the bottom of the pond. The Buddha avoids both these extremes by understanding that this name-and-form is a reflection, owing to the reflective nature of this pond of consciousness. It has no essence.

The name in this name-and-form, as we have already stated in an earlier sermon, is merely a formal name, or an apparent name.<sup>46</sup> And the form here is only a nominal form, a form only in name. There is neither an actual name nor a substantial form here. Name is only ap-

parent, and form is only nominal. With this preliminary understanding one has to arouse that wisdom by building up the ability to see through name-and-form, in order to win to freedom from this name-and-form.

So, in this sermon, our special attention has been on name-and-form, on the interrelation between name-and-form and consciousness. All this reveals to us the importance of the first two lines of the problematic verse already quoted, *viññānaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*,<sup>47</sup> "consciousness which is non-manifestative, endless, lustrous on all sides".

According to the Buddha's vision, by fully comprehending the fact that name-and-form is a mere image, or reflection, the non-manifestative consciousness develops the penetrative power to see through it. But those others, who could not understand that it is a reflection, aroused self-love and self-hate. It is as if one is trying to outstrip one's shadow by running towards it out of fun, while the other is trying to flee from it out of fear. Such is the nature of the two extreme views in this world.

*Dvīhi, bhikkhave, ditthigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke, atidhāvanti eke, cakkhumanto ca passanti*.<sup>48</sup> "Obsessed by two views, monks, are gods and men, some of whom lag behind, while others overreach, only they do see that have eyes to see."

This is how the *Itivuttaka*, the collection of the 'thus said' discourses, sums up the situation in the world. Some fall back and lag behind, while others overstep and overreach. It is only they that see, who have eyes to see.

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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> M I 56, *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> M I 53, *Sammādiṭṭhisutta*.  
<sup>4</sup> S IV 171, *Hatthapādapamasutta*.  
<sup>5</sup> A IV 100, *Sattasuriyasutta*; see sermon 8.  
<sup>6</sup> Mp IV 52.  
<sup>7</sup> S III 155, *Aniccasaññāsutta*.  
<sup>8</sup> A IV 353, *Sambodhisutta*.  
<sup>9</sup> Dhṃ 62, *Bālavagga*.  
<sup>10</sup> E.g. at M I 297, *MahāVedallasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> S II 267, *Āṇisutta*; see sermon 1.  
<sup>12</sup> Sn 1118, *Mogharājamāṇavapucchā*.  
<sup>13</sup> Sn 1119, *ibid*.  
<sup>14</sup> M I 251, *CūlaTanhāsāṅkhasutta*.  
<sup>15</sup> A IV 338, *Kiṃmūlakasutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> Sv-pt I 138.  
<sup>17</sup> Dhṃ 1, 2, *Yamakavagga*.  
<sup>18</sup> Cf. the discussion at As 250.  
<sup>19</sup> Vibh-a 289.  
<sup>20</sup> E.g. at D II 58, *MahāNidānasutta*.  
<sup>21</sup> S I 22, *Nasantisutta*.  
<sup>22</sup> E.g. at S V 253, *Iddhipādasamyutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> S V 272, *Uṇṇābhābhrahmaṇasutta*.  
<sup>24</sup> A II 145, *Bhikkunīsutta*.  
<sup>25</sup> Dhṃ 187, *Buddhavagga*.  
<sup>26</sup> M III 220, *Salāyatanavibhaṅgasutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> D II 353, D III 254, 287, 290, 291, M I 118, M III 77, 140, S II 168, S III 109, S V 1, 12, 13, 16, 18-20, 23, 383, A II 220-229, A III 141, A IV 237, A V 212-248.  
<sup>28</sup> M I 197, *MahāSāropamasutta*.  
<sup>29</sup> Th 315-316, *Rājadatta Thera*.  
<sup>30</sup> Th 267-268, *Nāgasamāla Thera*.  
<sup>31</sup> Th 269-270, *Nāgasamāla Thera*.  
<sup>32</sup> Pj II 587.  
<sup>33</sup> A IV 385, *Samiddhisutta*.  
<sup>34</sup> Dhṃ 1, *Yamakavagga*.  
<sup>35</sup> Dhṃ 221, *Kodhavagga*.  
<sup>36</sup> D I 1-46, *Brahmajālasutta*.  
<sup>37</sup> D I 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*.

<sup>38</sup> See sermon 5.

<sup>39</sup> Sn 909, *Mahāvīyūhasutta*.

<sup>40</sup> D I 46, *Brahmajālasutta*.

<sup>41</sup> D I 42, *Brahmajālasutta*.

<sup>42</sup> D I 45, *Brahmajālasutta*.

<sup>43</sup> S II 4, *Vibhaṅgasutta*.

<sup>44</sup> Ja VI 129 (no 546), *Ummaggajātaka*.

<sup>45</sup> See sermon 6.

<sup>46</sup> See sermon 1.

<sup>47</sup> M I 329, *Brahmanimantanikasutta*.

<sup>48</sup> It 43, *Ditthigatasutta*.

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

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

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

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

This is the tenth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*. With the help of a parable based on the problem of the gem in the *Ummaggajātaka*, we made an attempt, towards the end of our last sermon, to clarify to some extent how the personality view arises due to the ignorance of the fact that name-and-form is something reflected on consciousness. We mentioned in brief how a certain would-be wise man took the trouble to empty a pond and even dig out the mud under the impression that there is actually a gem in it, simply because there appeared to be a gem in the pond.

Similarly, by taking to be real name-and-form, which is only an image reflected on consciousness leading to a personality view, *sak-kāyaditṭhi*, both eternalism and nihilism, built on the two views of existence and non-existence, tended towards two extremes. Under the influence of self love, eternalism took up the view that there is a self, and looked forward to its perpetuation. Prompted by self hate, annihilationism or nihilism cherished the fond hope that the release from this self will occur at death. Both these extreme views confuse the issue by not understanding the reflected image as such.

Now how did the middle path, which the Buddha introduced to the world, avoid these two extremes? It is by offering a knowledge and vision of things as they are, *yathābhūtañāṇadassana*, in place of those two views of existence and non-existence. In other words, he made known to the world the true knowledge and vision that name-and-form is merely an image reflected on consciousness.

There is a special significance in the word *yathābhūta*. In contradistinction to the two words *bhava* and *vibhava*, the word *bhūta* has

some peculiarity of its own. In order to clarify the meaning of the term *yathābhūta*, we can draw upon a discourse in the *Itivuttaka*, a few lines of which we had already quoted at the end of the previous sermon. When presented in full, that discourse will make it clear why the Buddha introduced the word *bhūta* in preference to the existing usage in terms of *bhava* and *vibhava*. This is how that discourse proceeds:

*Dvīhi, bhikkhave, diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke, atidhāvanti eke, cakkhumanto va passanti. Kathañca, bhikkhave, olīyanti eke? Bhavārāmā, bhikkhave, devamanussā bhavaratā bhavasammuditā, tesam bhavanirodhāya dhamme desiyamāne cittaṃ na pakkhandati na pasīdati na santiṭṭhati nādhimuccati. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, olīyanti eke.*

*Kathañca, bhikkhave, atidhāvanti eke? Bhaveneva kho pana eke aṭṭiyamānā harāyamānā jigucchamānā vibhavaṃ abhinandanti - yato kira, bho, ayaṃ attā kāyassa bhedā paraṃ marañā ucchijjati vinassati na hoti paraṃ marañā, etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ etaṃ yāthāvanti. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, atidhāvanti eke.*

*Kathañca, bhikkhave, cakkhumanto passanti? Idha bhikkhu bhūtaṃ bhūtato passati, bhūtaṃ bhūtato disvā bhūtassa nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya paṭipanno hoti. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, cakkhumanto va passanti'ti."*<sup>2</sup>

"Obsessed by two views, monks, are gods and men, some of whom lag behind, while others overreach. Only they do see that have eyes to see. How, monks, do some lag behind? Gods and men, monks, delight in existence, they are attached to existence, they rejoice in existence. When *Dhamma* is being preached to them for the cessation of existence, their minds do not reach out towards it, do not get pleased in it, do not get steadied in it, do not rest confident with it. It is thus that some lag behind.

How, monks, do some overreach? Being troubled, ashamed, and disgusted of existence as such, some delight in non-existence - since this self, at the breaking up of this body after death, will be annihilated and destroyed, this is peace, this is excellent, this is how it should be. Thus, monks do some overreach.

And how, monks, do those with eyes see? Herein a monk sees the become as become. Having seen the become as become, he is tread-

ing the path towards dejection, dispassion and cessation regarding becoming. Thus it is, monks, that those with eyes see."

This passage clearly brings out the extreme nature of those two views of existence and non-existence. The two verses occurring at the end of this *sutta* present the gist of the discourse even more clearly:

*Ye bhūtaṃ bhūtato disvā,  
bhūtassa ca atikkamaṃ,  
yathābhūte vimuccanti,  
bhavataṅhā parikkhayā.*

*Sa ve bhūtapariñño so,  
vītataṅho bhavābhava,  
bhūtassa vibhavā bhikkhu,  
nāgacchati punabbhavaṃ.*

"Those who have seen the become as become,  
As well as the going beyond of whatever has become,  
Are released in regard to things as they are,  
By the exhaustion of craving for becoming.

That monk, who has fully comprehended the become,  
Who is devoid of craving for continued becoming,  
By the discontinuation of what has become,  
Will not come back again to a state of becoming."

Now it is extremely clear, even from the quotation as it stands, that the Buddha has interposed this word *bhūta* between the dichotomous terms *bhava* and *vibhava*. In the contemporary society, these two terms were used to denote the existence and the destruction of a soul. This usage is clearly revealed by some discourses, in which those who held on to similar views expressed them in such terms as *bhavissāmi* and *na bhavissāmi*.<sup>3</sup> These expressions, meaning 'I will be' and 'I will not be', carry with them an implication of a person or a self.

The term *bhūta*, on the other hand, is not amenable to such a usage. It has the passive sense of something that has become. Like that reflection mentioned earlier, it conveys the idea of being produced by causes and conditions. Going by the analogy of the reflected image mentioned above, the eternalist, because of his narcissistic self-love, gets attached to his own self image and lags behind. When the

Buddha preaches the *Dhamma* for the cessation of existence, he shrinks from fear that it would lead to the destruction of his self. It is like the narcissistic attempt to embrace one's own image in water out of self love.

The annihilationist view leads to an attitude of escapism, like that of one who is obsessed by his own shadow. One cannot outstrip one's own shadow. It is only a vain attempt. So also is the fond hope of the nihilist that by simply negating self one can be free from repeated birth. It turns out to be mere wishful thinking, because simply by virtue of the view 'I shall not be after death' one cannot win deliverance, so long as such defilements like ignorance and craving are there. These were the two extremes towards which those two dogmatic views of eternalism and annihilationism tended.

By introducing the term *bhūta* the Buddha made it known that the five groups are the product of causes and conditions, that they are conditionally arisen. In the *Itivuttaka*, for instance, one comes across the following significant lines: *Jātaṃ bhūtaṃ samuppannaṃ, kataṃ saṅkhatamaddhavaṃ*.<sup>4</sup> The reference here is to the five groups of grasping. They are "born", "become", "arisen" (that is conditionally arisen), "made up", "prepared", and "unstable". These words are suggestive of some artificiality. The word *addhavaṃ* brings out their impermanence and insubstantiality. There is no eternal essence, like *sat*, or being. It is merely a self image, a reflection. So it seems that the word *bhūta* has connotations of being a product of causes and conditions.

Therefore, in spite of the scare it has aroused in the soul-theorists, *Nibbāna* is not something that destroys a truly existing entity. Though *Nibbāna* is called *bhavanirodha*,<sup>5</sup> cessation of existence, according to the outlook of the Buddha the worldlings have merely a craving for existence, *bhavatañhā*, and not a real existence. It is only a conceit of existence, the conceit 'am', *asmimāna*.

In reality it amounts to a craving, and this is the significance of the term *tañhā ponobhāvīkā*, craving which makes for re-becoming. Because of that craving, which is always bent forward, worldlings keep running round in *saṃsāra*. But on analysis a concrete situation always reveals a state of a become, a *bhūta*, as something produced by causes and conditions.



A donkey drags a wagon when a carrot is projected towards it from the wagon. The journey of beings in *samsāra* is something like that. So what we have here is not the destruction of some existing essence of being or a soul. From the point of view of the *Dhamma* the cessation of existence, or *bhavanirodha*, amounts to a stopping of the process of becoming, by the removal of the causes leading to it, namely ignorance and craving. It is, in effect, the cessation of suffering itself.

Those who held on to the annihilationist view, entertained the hope that their view itself entitled them to their cherished goal. But it was in vain, because the ignorance, craving, and grasping within them created for them the five groups of grasping, or this mass of suffering, again and again despite their view, *uppajjati dukkham idaṃ punappaṇaṃ*.

So what we have here is a deep philosophy of things as they are, which follows a certain law of causality. The Buddha's middle path is based on this knowledge and vision of things as they are, avoiding both extremes of self indulgence and self mortification.

Let us now consider the question of existence involved in this context. The terms *bhava* and *vibhava* are generally associated with the idea of worlds' existence. Some seem to take *atthi*, or 'is', as the basic element in the grammatical structure. Very often those upholders of dogmatic views brought up such propositions as 'everything exists', *sabbaṃ atthi*, and 'nothing exists', *sabbaṃ natthi*, before the Buddha, expecting him to give a categorical answer.<sup>6</sup>

But the Buddha pointed out that *asmi*, or 'am', is more basic than the usage of 'is' and 'is not'. The most elementary concept is *asmi*, or 'am'. Hence the term *asmimāna*, the conceit 'am'. In the grammatical structure, the pride of place should be given to *asmi*, or 'am'. We sometimes tend to regard *atthi*, or 'is', as the primary term. But *asmi* deserves pride of place in so far as it is the basic element in the grammatical structure. It is like the central peg from which all measurings and surveyings of the world start, since the word *māna* in *asmimāna* also means 'measuring'. Given *asmi*, or 'am', everything else comes to be.

Let us take an illustration. If, for instance, we say "there is something", someone will pose the question "where is it?" It should be

either here or there or yonder, that is, over there. It can be in one of those three places. Now, if it is here, how does that place become a 'here'? That is where I am. 'There' is where he is, and 'yonder' is where you are.

So we have here the framework of the grammar. Here is the basic lining up for the formation of the grammatical structure, its most elementary pattern. So, then, 'I am', 'you are', and 'he is'. In this way we see that one can speak of the existence of something relative to a viewpoint represented by 'am' or 'I am'. That is why the Buddha rejected as extremes the two views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence, based on 'is', *atthi*, and 'is not', *natthi*.

Only when there is an 'I', can something exist relative to that I. And that something, if it is 'there', it is where 'I' am not present, or at a distance from me. If it is 'yonder', or over there, it is before you who are in front of me. And if it is 'here', it is beside me. From this we can see that this conceit 'am' is, as it were, the origin of the whole world, the origin of the world of grammar.

On a previous occasion, too, while discussing the significance of the two terms *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*, we had to make a similar statement.<sup>7</sup> The Buddha draws our attention to a very important fact in this concern, namely, the fact that the conceit 'am' does not arise without causes and conditions. It is not something uncaused, and unconditioned. If it is uncaused and unconditioned, it can never be made to cease. The notion 'am' arises due to certain causes and conditions. There is a word suggestive of this causal origin, namely *upādāya*.

Now, for instance, we use the term *pañc'upādānakkhandha*. When we speak of the five groups of grasping, the word *upādāna* (*upa + ā + dā*) is often rendered by grasping. The prefix *upa* is supposed to imply the tenacity of the hold.<sup>8</sup> One can therefore ask whether it is not sufficient to relax the hold on the five groups. Strictly speaking, the prefix *upa* in *upādāna* conveys the sense of proximity or nearness. Sometimes the two words *upeti* and *upādiyati* are found in juxtaposition. *Upeti*, *upa + i*, to go, means 'coming near' or 'approaching', and *upādiyati* has the sense of 'holding on to', having come close. In other words, we have here not only a case of holding, but of holding 'on to'.

So the totality of existence, from the point of view of *Dhamma*, is dependent on a holding on, or a grasping on. It is not something uncaused and unconditioned. Here we may remind ourselves of the simile of the winding of a rope or a cord which we brought up in a previous sermon.<sup>9</sup> We cannot help going back to the same simile again and again, if we are to deepen our understanding of the *Dhamma*.

In that illustration we spoke of two persons winding up several strands to make a rope or a cord. But both are winding in the same direction from either end. Such an attempt at winding, however long it is continued, does not result in an actual winding, for the simple reason that the winding from one end is continually being unwinded from the other end. But what happens if a third person catches hold of the rope in the middle? Due to that hold on the middle, something like a rope appears to get winded up.

Now existence, too, is something similar. It is because of the hold in the middle that the rope gets wound up. From the point of view of an outsider, the one in the middle is holding on to a rope. But the truth is, that the semblance of a rope is there due to that holding on itself. This, then, is the norm of this world. ‘Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease, *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ, sabbam taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*.<sup>10</sup>

It is in the nature of things that every winding ends up in an unwinding. But because of that hold in the middle, the windings get accumulated. Just because of his hold in the middle, his hand is under stress and strain. Similarly, the stress and strain that is existence is also due to a grasping or a holding on to, *upādānapaccayā bhavo*.

In fact, we have not given this illustration merely for the sake of a simile. We can adduce reasons for its validity even from the discourses. This word *upādāya* is particularly noteworthy. As we have already shown, *upādāna* does not simply mean grasping, or grasping rigidly, but holding on to something, having come close to it. This holding on creates a certain relationship, which may be technically termed a relativity. The two stand relative to each other. For instance, that rope exists relative to the grasping of the person who holds on to it. Now *upādāya* is the absolutive form of *upādāna*, it has the implication of something relative.

There is a discourse in the *Khandhasaṃyutta*, which clearly reveals this fact. It is a sermon preached by Venerable *Puṇṇa Mantāṇi-putta* to Venerable *Ānanda*. This is the relevant paragraph:

*Upādāya, āvuso Ānanda, asmīti hoti, no anupādāya. Kiñca upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya? Rūpaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya; vedanaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya; saññaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya; saṅkhāre upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya; viññāṇaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya. Upādāya, āvuso Ānanda, asmīti hoti, no anupādāya.*

*Seyyathāpi, āvuso Ānanda, ithī vā puriso vā daharo yuvā maṇḍanakajātiko ādāse vā parisuddhe pariyodāte acche vā udakapatte sakaṃ mukhanimittaṃ paccavekkhamāno upādāya passeyya, no anupādāya, evam eva kho, āvuso Ānanda, upādāya asmīti hoti, no anupādāya.*<sup>11</sup>

Let us now try to get at the meaning of this important passage, which should clarify further what we have already attempted to explain through similes.

"It is with dependence, friend *Ānanda*, that the notion 'am' occurs, not without dependence. With dependence on what, does the notion 'am' occur, and not without dependence? With dependence on form does the notion 'am' occur, not without dependence; with dependence on feeling does the notion 'am' occur, not without dependence; with dependence on perception does the notion 'am' occur, not without dependence; with dependence on preparations does the notion 'am' occur, not without dependence; with dependence on consciousness does the notion 'am' occur, not without dependence.

Just as, friend *Ānanda*, a woman or a man, youthful and fond of adornment, in looking at her or his facial image in a mirror or in a bowl filled with pure, clear, clean water, would be seeing it with dependence and not without dependence, even so, friend *Ānanda*, it is with dependence that the notion 'am' occurs, not without dependence."

In fact, it is rather difficult to render the word *upādāya*. It means 'in dependence on' something and has a relative sense. Reinforced with the emphatic double negative, the assertion seems to imply that the notion 'am' is something dependent and not independent, that it arises due to causes and conditions. In the explanation that follows,

this dictum is substantiated by bringing in the five groups or aggregates, relative to which one posits an 'am'.

The subsequent illustration serves to bring out the required nuance of the term *upādāya*, which is more often connected with the rather gross idea of grasping. The young woman or the young man is looking at her or his face in a mirror. They can see their own face, or the sign of it, *mukhanimitta*, only with the help of a mirror, that is, as an image reflected on it. They are dependent on a mirror or a similar object for seeing their own face, not independent.

What Venerable *Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta* seems to stress, is that the notion 'am' is the result of grasping or holding on to form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness. It is when one looks into a mirror that one suddenly becomes self-conscious. Whether one has a liking or a dislike for what one sees, one gets the notion 'this is me'. So it is by coming close to a mirror which reflects one's facial image that the notion 'am' occurs depending on it. The word *upādāya* therefore approximates to the idea of coming close and holding on to.

That notion occurs due to a relationship arising from that holding on. Even if one already has no such notion, the moment one looks into a mirror one is suddenly reminded of it, as if to exclaim: "Ah, here I am!" This is the gist of what Venerable *Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta* is trying to put across through this discourse.

This shows that the conceit 'am' arises due to the five grasping groups. The absolutive *upādāya*, though akin to *upādāna*, has a deeper significance. It is a word suggestive of a relationship. It does not merely mean a holding on, but also a certain necessary relationship arising out of that holding on. Just as the looking into a mirror or a bowl of water gives rise to a facial image as a reflection, here too the relationship calls forth the deluded reflection "here I am". Given the notion "here I am", there follows the corollary "things that are mine".

So there is supposed to be an 'I' in contradistinction to things that are 'mine'. It is the difficulty to demarcate the area of applicability between these two concepts that has given rise to insoluble problems. 'Who am I and what is mine?' The twenty modes of personality

view, *sakkāya diṭṭhi*, portray how one is at one's wit's end to solve this problem.

Let us now see how the twenty modes of personality view are made up. For instance, as regards form, it is fourfold as follows: *Rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ*.<sup>12</sup> "He regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form." It is the same with the other four groups. In this way, the personality view is altogether twenty-fold.

All this comes about due to the ignorance that name-and-form is only a reflection, like that facial image. In grasping this self image of name-and-form one grasps the five groups. Attachment to name-and-form amounts to a holding on to these five groups. To many, the relationship between name-and-form and the grasping groups appears as a big puzzle. Wherever one looks, one sees this self image of name-and-form. But when one grasps it, what comes within the grasp is a group of form, feeling, perception, preparations, and consciousness.

The magical illusion created by consciousness is so complete that it is capable of playing a dual role, as in double acting. Because it reflects, like a mirror, consciousness itself is grasped, just as one grasps the mirror. Not only the reflection of the mirror, but the mirror itself is grasped. The grasping group of consciousness represents such a predicament.

One can form an idea about the relation between name-and-form and consciousness by going deeper into the implications of this discourse. In the discussion of the interrelation between name and form, the Buddha makes use of two highly significant terms, namely *adhivacanasamphassa* and *paṭighasamphassa*. How contact arises dependent on name-and-form is explained by the Buddha in the *Mahā-Nidānasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.<sup>13</sup> It is addressed to Venerable *Ānanda* in the form of a catechism.

*Phassa*, or contact, is a sort of hybrid, carrying with it the implications of both *adhivacanasamphassa* and *paṭighasamphassa*. That is to say, it partakes of the character of name, *nāma*, as suggested by *adhivacanasamphassa*, as well as that of form, *rūpa*, indicated by

*paṭighasamphassa*. This will be clear from the relevant section of the catechism in the *MahāNidānasutta*:

*‘Nāmarūpapaccayā phasso’ti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, tad’Ānanda, imināpetam pariyaṃyena veditabbaṃ, yathā nāmarūpapaccayā phasso. Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmakāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati api nu kho rūpakāye adhivacanasamphasso paññāyethā’ti?’ ‘No hetam, bhante.’*

*‘Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi rūpakāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati api nu kho nāmakāye paṭighasamphasso paññāyethā’ti?’ ‘No hetam, bhante.’*

*‘Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmakāyassa ca rūpakāyassa ca paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati api nu kho adhivacanasamphasso vā paṭighasamphasso vā paññāyethā’ti?’ ‘No hetam, bhante.’*

*‘Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmarūpassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati api nu kho phasso paññāyethā’ti?’ ‘No hetam, bhante.’ ‘Tasmātiḥ’Ānanda, eseva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo phassassa, yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ.’*

"From name-and-form as condition, contact comes to be. Thus it has been said above. And that *Ānanda*, should be understood in this manner, too, as to how from name-and-form as condition, contact arises. If, *Ānanda*, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents, by which the name-group, *nāma-kāya*, is designated were absent, would there be manifest any verbal impression, *adhivacanasamphassa*, in the form-group, *rūpa-kāya*?" "There would not, lord."

"If, *Ānanda*, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents, by which the form-group is designated were absent, would there be manifest any resistance-impression, *paṭighasamphasso*, in the name-group?" "There would not, lord."

"And if, *Ānanda*, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents, by which there is a designation of both name-group and form-group were absent, would there be manifest either any verbal impression or any resistance-impression?" "There would not, lord."

"And if, *Ānanda*, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents, by which there comes to be a designation of name-and-form were absent, would there be manifest any contact?" "There would not, lord." "Wherefore, *Ānanda*, this itself is the cause, this is the origin, this is the condition for contact, that is to say, name-and-form."

With the help of four words of allied sense, namely *ākāra*, mode, *līṅga*, characteristic, *nimitta*, sign, and *uddesa*, exponent, the Buddha catechetically brings out four conclusions by this disquisition. They are:

1) By whatever modes, characteristics, signs and exponents the name-group, *nāma-kāya*, is designated, in their absence no designation of verbal impression, *adhivacanasamphassa*, in the form-group, *rūpa-kāya*, is possible.

2) By whatever modes, characteristics, signs and exponents the form-group is designated, in their absence no designation of resistance-impression, *paṭighasamphasso*, in the name-group, *nāmakāya*, is possible.

3) By whatever modes, characteristics, signs and exponents both name-group and form-group are designated, in their absence no designation of verbal impression or resistance-impression is possible.

4) By whatever modes, characteristics, signs and exponents name-and-form is designated, in their absence no designation of contact is possible.

All this may well appear like a riddle, but then let us consider what name-and-form means, to begin with. The definition we gave to *nāma* in our very first sermon happened to be different from the well known definition nowadays given in terms of a bending.<sup>14</sup> We interpreted *nāma* in the sense of a 'naming'. Now this term *adhivacana* also conveys the same idea. *Adhivacana*, synonym, *nirutti*, nomenclature, and *paññatti*, designation, are part and parcel of linguistic usage.

In the *Niruttipathasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta* one comes across three terms, *niruttipatha*, *adhivacanapatha*, and *paññattipatha*, pathways of nomenclature, pathways of synonyms, pathways of designation.<sup>15</sup> There three terms are closely allied in meaning, in that they bring out in sharp relief three aspects of linguistic usage. *Nirutti* emphasises the explanatory or expository function of lan-



guage, *adhivacana* its symbolic and metaphorical character, while *paññatti* brings out its dependence on convention.

What we have here is *adhivacanasamphassa*. Its affinity to name is obvious, and this is precisely the meaning we attributed to *nāma*. Therefore, what we have in this concept of *nāmakāya*, or name-group, literally ‘name-body’, is a set of first principles in linguistic usage pertaining to definition.

The form-group, or *rūpakāya*, literally ‘form-body’, on the other hand has something to do with resistance, as suggested by the term *paṭiḥhasamphassa*. *Paṭiḥha* means ‘striking against’. Form, or *rūpa*, has a striking quality, while name, or *nāma*, has a descriptive quality. *Phassa*, or contact, is a hybrid of these two. This is what gives a deeper dimension to the above disquisition.

The point that the Buddha seeks to drive home is the fact that the concept of contact necessarily presupposes both name and form. In other words, name and form are mutually interrelated, as already stated above. There would be no verbal impression in the form-group, if there were no modes, characteristics, etc., proper to name. Likewise there could be no resistant impression in the name-group, if there were no modes, characteristics, etc., proper to form.

At first sight these two may appear as totally opposed to each other. But what is implied is a case of mutual interrelation. The expression peculiar to the name-group is a necessary condition for the form-group, while the resistance peculiar to the form-group is a necessary condition for the name-group. Since here we have something deep, let us go for an illustration for the sake of clarity.

As we have already stated, a verbal impression in regard to the form-group is there because of the constituents of the name-group. Now the form-group consists of the four great primaries earth, water, fire and air. Even to distinguish between them by their qualities of hardness and softness, hotness and coolness, etc., feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, which are the constituents of the name-group, have to play their part. Thus it is with the help of those members on the name side that the four basic elements associated with form receive recognition.

Metaphor is a figure of speech, common in ornate literary language as well as in technical terminology. Here the inanimate is ani-

mated by personification. What is proper to the animate world is superimposed on the inanimate. Now the word *adhivacana* is, even literally, a superimposition, and it is a term with obvious metaphorical associations. Whereas in the literary field it has an ornate value as a figurative expression, in technical usage it serves the purpose of facility of expression by getting the tools to speak for themselves.

For instance, a carpenter might speak of two planks touching each other as if they can actually touch and feel. The concept of touch, even when it is attributed to inanimate objects, is the outcome of attention, in this case the attention of the carpenter. Here, again, we are reminded of the role of attention in the origination of things as stated in the *Kiṇṇmūlakasutta* and *Samiddhisutta* discussed above.<sup>16</sup> In accordance with the dictum "Mind is the forerunner of all things",<sup>17</sup> "All things are rooted in interest, they originate with attention and arise out of contact", *chandamūlakā, āvuso, sabbe dhammā, manasikārasambhavā, phassasamudayā* (etc.).<sup>18</sup> Wherever the carpenter's interest went, his attention discovered and picked up the thing, and here the thing is the fact of two planks touching each other.

Interest, attention and contact together bring out some deeper implications of the law of dependent arising. Not only with regard to inanimate objects, but even in the case of this conscious body, the question of contact is related to the fact of attention.

If, for instance I ask what I am touching now, one might say that I am touching the palm leaf fan in my hand. This is because we usually associate the idea of touching with the hand that holds. But suppose I put away the fan and ask again what I am touching now, one might find it difficult to answer. It might not be possible for another to guess by mere external observation, since it is essentially subjective. It is dependent on my attention. It could even be my robe that I am touching in the sense of contact, in which case I am becoming conscious of my body as apart from the robe I am wearing.

Consciousness follows in the wake of attention. Whatever my attention picks up, of that I am conscious. Though I have in front of me so many apparently visible objects, until my attention is focussed, eye-consciousness does not come about. The basic function of this type of consciousness, then, is to distinguish between the eye and the

object seen. It is only after the eye has become conscious, that other factors necessary for sense perception fall into place.

The two things born of that basic discrimination, together with the discriminating consciousness itself, that is eye-consciousness, make up the concept of contact. *Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhaviññāṇam, tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso.*<sup>19</sup> "Dependent on eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises, the concurrence of the three is contact."

The same principle holds good in the case of the two planks touching each other. All this goes to show that it is with the help of the factors in the name-group that we can even metaphorically speak of a contact between inanimate things.

Let us now consider how resistance-impression, *paṭighasamphassa*, comes about. It is said that the factors of the form-group have a part to play in producing resistance-impression on the name-group. We sometimes speak of an idea 'striking us', as if it were something material. Or else an idea could be 'at the back' of our mind and a word 'on the tip' of our tongue.

The clearest manifestation of contact is that between material objects, where collision is suggestive of resistance, as implied by the word *paṭigha*. This primary sense of striking against or striking together is implicit even in the simile given by the Buddha in the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, and in the *Phassa-mūlakasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, concerning two sticks being rubbed together to kindle a fire.<sup>20</sup>

Though as a gross manifestation contact is primarily associated with the form-group, it is essentially connected with the name-group, as we have already explained with illustrations. It is when both resistance-impression and verbal impression come together that contact arises, dependent on name-and-form, *nāmarūpapaccayā phasso*.

Another point that needs to be clarified in this connection is the exact significance of the word *rūpa*. This word has been variously interpreted and explained among different Buddhist sects. How did the Buddha define *rūpa*? In ordinary usage it can mean either forms visible to the eye, or whatever is generally spoken of as 'material'. Its exact significance has become a subject of controversy. What precisely do we mean by '*rūpa*'?

The Buddha himself has explained the word, giving the following etymology in the *Khajjanīyasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. While defining the five groups there, he defines the form group as follows:

*Kiñca, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ vadetha? Ruppātīti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā rūpan'ti vuccati. Kena ruppāti? Sītena pi ruppāti, uñhena pi ruppāti, jighacchāya pi ruppāti, pipāsāya pi ruppāti, daṃsamakasa-vātātapasirīṃsapasamphassena pi ruppāti. Ruppātīti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā rūpan'ti vuccati.*<sup>21</sup>

"And what, monks, do you call *rūpa*? It is affected, monks, that is why it is called *rūpa*. Affected by what? Affected by cold, affected by heat, affected by hunger, affected by thirst, affected by contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun and serpents. It is affected, monks, that is why it is called *rūpa*."

This definition seems to convey something very deep, so much so that various Buddhist sects came out with various interpretations of this passage. The Buddha departs from the way of approach taken up by the materialistic systems of thought in the world in defining *rūpa* with *ruppāti*, 'being affected'. It is not the inanimate trees and rocks in the world that are said to be affected by cold and heat, but this conscious body. So this body is not conceived of as a bundle of atoms to be animated by introducing into it a life faculty, *jīvitindriya*. What is meant by *rūpa* is this same body, this body with form, which, for the meditator, is a fact of experience.

Attempts at interpretation from a scholastic point of view created a lot of complications. But the definition, as it stands, is clear enough. It is directly addressed to experience. The purpose of the entire *Dhamma* preached by the Buddha is not to encourage an academic dabbling in philosophical subtleties with a mere jumble of words. The purpose is utter disenchantment, dispassion and cessation, *ekantanibbidāya, virāgāya, nirodhāya*.<sup>22</sup> Therefore the etymology given here in terms of *ruppāti*, 'to be affected', is in full accord with that purpose. *Rūpa* is so called, because it is affected by cold, heat, and the sting of gadflies, mosquitoes, etc., not because of any atomism in it.

If we are to examine further the meaning of this verb *ruppāti*, we can count on the following quotation from the *Pinṅgiyasutta* of the

*Pārāyanavagga* in the *Sutta Nipāta*. It runs: *ruppanti rūpesu janā pamattā*,<sup>23</sup> "heedless men are affected in regard to forms". The canonical commentary *Cūlaniddesa*, commenting on the word, brings out the various nuances connected with it. *Ruppantīti kuppanti pīlayanti ghaṭṭayanti byādhitā domanassitā honti*.<sup>24</sup> "*Ruppanti* means to be adversely affected, to be afflicted, to come into contact with, to be dis-eased and dis-pleased."

Surely it is not the trees and rocks that are affected in this manner. It is this animate body that is subject to all this. The pragmatic purpose of utter detachment, dispassion and cessation is clear enough even from this commentary. What is known as the form-group, *rūpakhandha*, is one vast wound with nine apertures.<sup>25</sup> This wound is affected when it is touched by cold and heat, when gadflies and mosquitoes land on it. This wound gets irritated by them.

We come across yet another canonical reference in support of these nuances in the following two lines in the *Uṭṭhānasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. *Āturānañhi kā niddā, sallaviddhāna ruppataṃ*.<sup>26</sup> "For what sleep could there be for those who are afflicted, being pierced with a dart."

These two lines stress the need for heedfulness for beings pierced with the arrow of craving. Here, too, the verb *ruppanti* has the sense of being affected or afflicted. All this goes to show that the early Buddhist concept of *rūpa* had a striking simplicity about it.

As we have already stated at the very outset, the teachings in the discourses are simple enough. But there is a certain depth in this very simplicity, for it is only when the water is lucid and limpid that one can see the bottom of a pond. But with the passage of time there was a tendency to lose interest in these discourses, because of the general predilection for complexity.

Materialistic philosophers, in particular, were carried away by this trend, whether they were Hindus or Buddhists. Modern day scientists, too, got caught in this trend. They pursued the materialistic overtones of the word *rūpa*, without realizing that they are running after a mirage. They went on analysing matter, until they ended up with an atomism and grasped a heap of concepts. The analysis of matter thus precipitated a grasping of a mass of concepts. Whether one grasps a pole or a mole, it is a grasping all the same.

The Buddha's admonitions, on the contrary, point in a different direction. He pointed out that in order to be free from the burdensome oppression of form, one has to be free from the perception of form. What is of relevance here is the very perception of form, *rūpa-saññā*. From the point of view of *Dhamma*, any attempt at analysis of the materialistic concept of form, or any microscopic analysis of matter, would lead to a pursuit of a mirage.

This fact, the modern day scientist is now in a position to appreciate. He has found that the mind with which he carries on the analysis is influencing his findings at every level. In other words, he has been running after a mirage, due to his ignorance of the mutual interrelation between name and form. One would not be in such a plight, if one understands that the real problem at issue is not that of form, but of the perception of form.

In an earlier sermon we happened to quote a verse which makes it extremely clear. Let us now hark back to that verse, which occurs in the *Jaṭāsutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*.<sup>27</sup>

*Yattha nāmañca rūpañca,  
asesaṃ uparujjhatī,  
paṭighaṃ rūpasaññā ca,  
etthesā chijjate jaṭā.*

"Where name and form

As well as resistance and perception of form

Are completely cut off,

It is there that the tangle gets snapped."

The entire *samsāric* problem is solved when the tangle gets snapped. Name and form, resistance and perception of form are completely cut off in that non-manifestative consciousness mentioned in our earlier sermons.<sup>28</sup> That, in effect, is the end of the tangle within and the tangle without.

Our discussion of the law of dependent arising must have made it clear that there is an interrelation between name-and-form and consciousness on the one hand, and between name and form themselves on the other. This, then, is a case of a tangle within and a tangle without. Like the central spot of a whirlpool, the deepest point of the entire formula of *paṭicca samuppāda* is traceable to the interrelation

that obtains between name and form on the one hand, and between name-and-form and consciousness on the other.

As far as the significance of perception of form is concerned, the true purpose of the spiritual endeavour, according to the Buddha, is the very freedom from this perception of form. How does perception of form come about? It is due to that 'striking against', or resistance. Perception of form arises, for instance, when gadflies and mosquitoes land on this body.

As we have already mentioned, even the distinctions of hard and soft, etc., with which we recognize the four elements, is a matter of touching. We are only trying to measure and gauge the four great primaries with this human frame. We can never ever comprehend fully the gamut of these four great primaries. But we are trying to understand them through this human frame in a way that is meaningful to our lives.

All kinds of beings have their own specific experience of 'touch', in relation to their experience of the four elements. So what we have here is entirely a question of perception of form. The true purpose, then, should be the release of one's mind from this perception of form. It is only when the mind is freed from resistance and the perception of form, as well as from name-and-form, that one can win to the deliverance from this problem of the tangle within and the tangle without that is *saṃsāra*.

Yet another fact emerges from the above discussion. The two views of existence and non-existence, *bhava/vibhava*, asserting an absolute existence and an absolute non-existence, seem to have posed an insoluble problem to many philosophers. Concerning the origin of the world, they wondered whether *sat*, or being, came out of *asat*, or non-being, or vice versa.

All these problems arose out of a misunderstanding about form, or material objects, as we may well infer from the following two lines of a verse in the *Kalahavivādasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. *Rūpesu disvā vibhavaṃ bhavañca, vinicchayaṃ kurute jantu loke.*<sup>29</sup> "Having seen the existence and destruction of material forms, a man in this world comes to a conclusion."

What is the conclusion? That there is an absolute existence and an absolute non-existence. One comes to this conclusion drawing an in-

ference from the behaviour of visible objects. For instance, we could presume that this machine before us exists in an absolute sense, ignoring the causes and conditions underlying its existence. The day this machine is destroyed we would say: "It was, but now it is not."

The Buddha has pointed out that such absolute views of existence and non-existence are a result of an incorrect understanding about form. What actually is involved here is the perception of form. Due to a misconception about the perception of form, the world inclines towards the two extreme views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence.

So the whole point of our discussion today has been the clarification of the mutual interrelation between name and form, to show that name-and-form itself is only an image, or a shadow, reflected on consciousness.



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- <sup>1</sup> M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.  
<sup>2</sup> It 43, *Dīṭṭhigatasutta*.  
<sup>3</sup> E.g. at M I 8, *Sabbāsavasutta*; or at M I 135, *Alaggadūpamasutta*.  
<sup>4</sup> It 37, *Ajātasutta*.  
<sup>5</sup> E.g. at A V 9, *Sāriputtasutta*.  
<sup>6</sup> E.g. at S II 76, *Jāṇussoṇisutta*.  
<sup>7</sup> See sermon 2.  
<sup>8</sup> Vism 569.  
<sup>9</sup> See sermon 8.  
<sup>10</sup> S V 423, *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*.  
<sup>11</sup> S III 105, *Anandasutta*.  
<sup>12</sup> M I 300, *Cūḷavedallasutta*.  
<sup>13</sup> D II 62, *MahāNidānasutta*.  
<sup>14</sup> See sermon 1.  
<sup>15</sup> S III 71, *Niruttipathasutta*.  
<sup>16</sup> A IV 385, *Samiddhisutta*; A IV 338, *Kiṃmūlakasutta*; see sermon 9.  
<sup>17</sup> Dh 1, *Yamakavagga*.  
<sup>18</sup> A IV 338, *Kiṃmūlakasutta*.  
<sup>19</sup> M I 111, *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*.  
<sup>20</sup> M III 242, *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta*; S IV 215, *Phassamūlakasutta*.  
<sup>21</sup> S III 86, *Khajjanīyasutta*.  
<sup>22</sup> This expression occurs e.g. at D II 251, *MahāGovindasutta*.  
<sup>23</sup> Sn 1121, *Piṅgiyamāṇavapucchā*.  
<sup>24</sup> Nidd II 238.  
<sup>25</sup> A IV 386, *Gaṇḍasutta*.  
<sup>26</sup> Sn 331, *Uṭṭhānasutta*.  
<sup>27</sup> S I 13, *Jaṭāsutta*; see sermon 1.  
<sup>28</sup> See sermon 7.  
<sup>29</sup> Sn 867, *Kalahavivādasutta*.