

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

*Etam santam, etam paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam.*¹

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

With the permission of the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the thirty-first sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

In our attempt to understand some subtle characteristics of the middle path leading to *Nibbāna* in our last sermon, we found some discourses like *Ṣaḍāyatanavibhaṅgasutta*, *Oghataraṇasutta*, *Vitakkasanthānasutta*, *Māgandīyasutta*, *Rathavinītasutta* and *Alagaddūpamasutta* particularly helpful. It became clear that the twin principle of pragmatism and relativity, underlying the norm of dependent arising, could be gleaned to a great extent from those discourses.

We also found that the course of practice leading to *Nibbāna* is not an accumulation or amassing, but a gradual process of attenuation or effacement, tending towards a realization of voidness, free from notions of 'I' and 'mine'.

It is for the purpose of emphasizing the twin principles of pragmatism and relativity that the Buddha compared the *Dhamma* to a raft in the *Alagaddūpamasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In this series of sermons we made allusions to this simile in brief on several occasions, but let us now try to examine this simile in more detail. In order to present the parable of the raft, the Buddha addressed the monks and made the following declaration:

*Kullūpamaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dhammaṃ desissāmi nittharaṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya.*² "Monks, I shall preach to you the *Dhamma* comparable to a raft for crossing over and not for grasping." With this introductory declaration, he goes on to relate the parable of the raft.

"Monks, suppose a man in the course of a long journey, saw a great expanse of water whose near shore was dangerous and fearful and whose

further shore was safe and free from fear. But there was no ferry boat or bridge going to the far shore. Then he thought:

‘There is this great expanse of water whose near shore is dangerous and fearful and whose further shore is safe and free from fear. But there is no ferry boat or bridge going to the far shore. Suppose I collect grass, sticks, branches and leaves and bind them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and making an effort with my hands and feet I were to get safely across to the far shore’.

And then the man collected grass, sticks, branches and leaves and bound them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and making an effort with his hands and feet he got safely across to the far shore. Then, when he got safely across and had arrived at the far shore he might think thus:

‘This raft has been very helpful to me, supported by it and making an effort with my hands and feet I got safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to hoist it on my head or load it on my shoulder and then go wherever I want.’

Now, monks, what do you think, by doing so would that man be doing what should be done with that raft?" "No, Venerable Sir."

"By doing what would that man be doing what should be done with that raft? Here, monks, when that man got across and had arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: ‘This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it and making an effort with my hands and feet I got safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to haul it on dry land or set it adrift in the water and then go wherever I want.’

Now it is by so doing that that man would be doing what should be done with the raft. Even so, monks, I have shown you how the *Dhamma* is similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping." And the Buddha concludes with the significant statement:

Kullūpamaṃ vo , bhikkhave, ājānantehi dhammā pi vo pahātabbā, pageva adhammā. "Monks, when you know the *Dhamma* to be similar to a raft, you should abandon even good states, how much more so bad states".

So it seems, this raft simile has a very deep meaning. The building of the raft by the person wishing to cross symbolizes the pragmatic and

relative values we highlighted in connection with the path of practice leading to *Nibbāna*. The raft improvised with self effort is not for grasping or carrying on one's shoulder. As we have already pointed out with reference to such discourses like *Salāyatanavibhaṅgasutta*, apart from the purpose of crossing, there is nothing worth holding on to or grasping. Why so? Because the aim of this holy life or this path of practice is non-grasping instead of grasping; non-identification, *atammayatā*, instead of identification, *tammayatā*; assetlessness, *nirupadhi*, instead of assets, *upadhi*.

The importance attached to this simile is so much that the Buddha reminds the monks of it in the *MahāTaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta* also, with the following allusion:

Imaṃ ce tumhe, bhikkhave, diṭṭhiṃ evaṃ parisuddhaṃ evaṃ pari-yodātaṃ allīyetha kelāyetha dhanāyetha mamāyetha, api nu tumhe, bhikkhave, kullūpamaṃ dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājāneyyatha nittharaṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya? No h'etaṃ, bhante!

*Imaṃ ce tumhe, bhikkhave, diṭṭhiṃ evaṃ parisuddhaṃ evaṃ pari-yodātaṃ na allīyetha na kelāyetha na dhanāyetha na mamāyetha, api nu tumhe, bhikkhave, kullūpamaṃ dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājāneyyatha nittharaṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya? Evaṃ, bhante.*³

"Monks, purified and cleansed as this view is, if you adhere to it, cherish it, treasure it and treat it as a possession, would you then understand the *Dhamma* that has been taught as similar to a raft being for the purpose of crossing over and not for the purpose of grasping?" "No, Venerable Sir!"

"Monks, purified and cleansed as this view is, if you do not adhere to it, cherish it, treasure it and treat it as a possession, would you then understand the *Dhamma* that has been taught as similar to a raft being for the purpose of crossing over and not for the purpose of grasping?" "Yes, Venerable Sir!"

This is an illustration of the relative validity of the constituents of the path. Instead of an accumulation and an amassing, we have here a setting in motion of a sequence of psychological states mutually interconnected according to the law of relativity. As in the simile of the relay of chariots, what we have here is a progression by relative dependence.

In this sequential progression, we see an illustration of the quality of leading onward, *opanayika*, characteristic of this *Dhamma*. The term *opanayika* has been variously interpreted, but we get a clue to its correct meaning in the *Udāyisutta* of the *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. Venerable Udāyi declares his attainment of the supramundane path in these words:

*Dhammo ca me, bhante, abhisamito, maggo ca me paṭiladdho, yo me bhāvito bahulīkato tathā tathā viharantaṃ tathattāya upanessati.*⁴

"The *Dhamma* has been well understood by me, Venerable Sir, and that path has been obtained which, when developed and cultivated, will lead me onwards to such states as I go on dwelling in the appropriate way."

The implication is that the *Dhamma* has the intrinsic quality of leading onward whoever is dwelling according to it so that he attains states of distinction independent of another's intervention.

A clearer illustration of this intrinsic quality can be found in the *Cetanākaraṇīyasutta* among the Tens of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. In that discourse, the Buddha describes how a long sequence of mental states is interconnected in a subtle way, according to the principle of relativity, leading onwards as far as final deliverance itself. The following section of that long discourse might suffice as an illustration of the mutual interconnection between the mental states in the list.

*Sīlavato, bhikkhave, sīlasampannassa na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ 'avip- paṭisāro me uppajjatū'ti; dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ sīlavato sīlasampannassa avip- paṭisāro uppajjati. Avip- paṭisārissa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ 'pāmojjaṃ me uppajjatū'ti; dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ avip- paṭisārissa pāmojjaṃ jāyati. Pamuditassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ 'pīti me uppajjatū'ti; dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ pamuditassa pīti uppajjati.*⁵

"To one who is virtuous, monks, who is endowed with virtue, there is no need for an act of will like: 'let remorselessness arise in me'; it is in the nature of *Dhamma*, monks, that remorselessness arises in one who is virtuous, who is endowed with virtue. To one who is free from remorse, monks, there is no need for an act of will like: 'let gladness arise in me'; it is in the nature of *Dhamma*, monks, that gladness arises in one who is free from remorse. To one who is glad, monks, there is no need for an act of

will like: 'let joy arise in me'; it is in the nature of *Dhamma*, monks, that joy arises in one who is glad."

In this way, the Buddha outlines the entire course of training leading up to knowledge and vision of deliverance, interlacing a long line of mental states in such a way as to seem an almost effortless flow. The profound utterance, with which the Buddha sums up this discourse, is itself a tribute to the quality of leading onward, *opanayika*, in this *Dhamma*.

Iti kho, bhikkhave, dhammā va dhamme abhisandenti, dhammā va dhamme paripūrenti apārā pāraṃ gamanāya. "Thus, monks, mere phenomena flow into other phenomena, mere phenomena fulfil other phenomena in the process of going from the not beyond to the beyond."

So, then, in the last analysis, it is only a question of phenomena. There is no 'I' or 'mine' involved. That push, that impetus leading to *Nibbāna*, it seems, is found ingrained in the *Dhamma* itself.

Not only the term *opanayika*, all the six terms used to qualify the *Dhamma* are highly significant. They are also interconnected in meaning. That is why very often in explaining one term others are dragged in. Sometimes the questioner is concerned only about the meaning of the term *sandiṭṭhika*, but the Buddha presents to him all the six qualities of the *Dhamma*.⁶ In discourses like *MahāTanhāsankhayasutta* the emphasis is on the term *opanayika*, but there, too, the Buddha brings in all the six terms, because they are associated in sense.

Let us now examine how these six epithets are associated in sense. The usual explanation of *svākkhata*, "well preached", is that the *Dhamma* has been preached by the Buddha properly intoned with perfect symmetry as to the letter and to the spirit, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end. But the true meaning of *svākkhata* emerges when examined from the point of view of practice.

The quality of being visible here and now, *sandiṭṭhika*, that is not found in an ill-preached doctrine, *durakkhāta dhamma*, is to be found in this well-preached *Dhamma*. Whereas an ill-preached doctrine only promises a goal attainable in the next world, the well-preached *Dhamma* points to a goal attainable in this world itself. Therefore we have to understand the full import of the epithet *svakkhāta* in relation to the next quality, *sandiṭṭhika*, visible here and now.

We have already dealt with this quality to some extent in connection with an episode about General Sīha in an earlier sermon.⁷ Briefly stated, the meaning of the term *sandiṭṭhika* is "visible here and now, in this very life", as far as the results are concerned. The same idea is conveyed by the expression *diṭṭheva dhamme* often cited with reference to *Nibbāna* in the standard phrase, *diṭṭheva dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā*,⁸ "having realized by one's own higher knowledge in this very life". Whereas *samparāyika* stands for what comes after death, in another life, *sandiṭṭhika* points to the attainability of results in this very life, here and now.

The term *sandiṭṭhika* can be related to the next epithet *akālika*. Since the results are attainable here and now, it does not involve an interval in time. It is, in other words, timeless, *akālika*.

In our earlier sermons we brought in, as an illustration for this involvement with time, the period of suspense after an examination, these days, awaiting results. *Nibbāna*-examination, on the other hand, yields results then and there and produces the certificate immediately. So we see the quality "visible here and now" implicating a timelessness.

Unfortunately, however, the term *akālika* also suffered by much commentarial jargon. Meanings totally foreign to the original sense came to be tagged on, so much so that it was taken to mean 'true for all times' or 'eternal'.

The *Samiddhisutta* in the *Devatāsaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* clarifies for us the original meaning of the term *akālika*. One day, Venerable Samiddhi had a bath at the hot springs in Tapodārāma and was drying his body outside in the sun. A deity seeing his handsome body gave him an advice contrary to the spirit of the *Dhamma*.

*Bhuñja, bhikkhu, mānusaḥ kāme, mā sandiṭṭhikaṃ hitvā kālikaṃ anudhāvi.*⁹ "Enjoy, monk, human sensual pleasures, do not abandon what is visible here and now and run after what takes time!"

Venerable Samiddhi met the challenge with the following explanatory reply:

Na kvhāhaṃ, āvuso, sandiṭṭhikaṃ hitvā kālikaṃ anudhāvāmi. Kālikañca khvāhaṃ, āvuso, hitvā sandiṭṭhikaṃ anudhāvāmi. Kālikā hi, āvuso, kāmā vuttā bhagavatā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiiyo. Sandiṭṭhiko ayaṃ dhammo akāliko ehipassiko opanayyiko paccattaṃ vedītabbo viññūhi.

"It is not the case, friend, that I abandon what is visible here and now in order to run after what involves time. On the contrary, I am abandoning what involves time to run after what is visible here and now. For the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures are time involving, fraught with much suffering, much despair, and that more dangers lurk in them. Visible here and now is this *Dhamma*, timeless, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards, to be realized personally by the wise."

This explanation makes it clear that the two terms *sandiṭṭhika* and *akālika* are allied in meaning. That is why *sandiṭṭhika* is contrasted with *kālika* in the above dialogue. What comes after death is *kālika*, involving time. It may come or may not come, one cannot be certain about it. But of what is visible here and now, in this very life, one can be certain. There is no time gap. It is timeless.

The epithet *akālika* is implicitly connected with the next epithet, *ehipassika*. If the result can be seen here and now, without involving time, there is good reason for the challenge: 'come and see!' If the result can be seen only in the next world, all one can say is: 'go and see!'

As a matter of fact, it is not the Buddha who says: 'come and see!', it is the *Dhamma* itself that makes this challenge. That is why the term *ehipassika* is regarded as an epithet of the *Dhamma*. *Dhamma* itself invites the wise to come and see.

Those who took up the challenge right in earnest have proved for themselves the realizable nature of the *Dhamma*, which is the justification for the last epithet, *paccattaṃ vedītabbo viññūhi*, "to be experienced by the wise each one by oneself".

The inviting nature of the *Dhamma* leads to personal experience and that highlights the *opanayika* quality of leading onwards. True to the statement *tathā tathā viharantaṃ tathattāya upanessati*,¹⁰ the *Dhamma* leads him onwards to appropriate states as he lives according to it.

Sometimes the Buddha sums up the entire body of *Dhamma* he has preached in terms of the thirty-seven participative factors of enlightenment. Particularly in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* we find him addressing the monks in the following memorable words:

Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, ye te mayā dhammā abhiññā desitā, te vo sādhukaṃ uggahetvā āsevitabbā bhāvetabbā bahulikātabbā, yathayidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ, tadassa bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ.

Katame ca te, bhikkhave, dhammā mayā abhiññā desitā ye vo sādhukaṃ uggahetvā āsevitabbā bhāvetabbā bahulikātabbā, yathayidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ, tadassa bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ?

*Seyyathidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhāna cattāro sammappadhānā cattāro iddhipādā pañcindriyāni pañca balāni satta bojjaṅgā ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo.*¹¹

"Therefore, monks, whatever *dhammas* I have preached with higher knowledge, you should cultivate, develop and practice thoroughly, so that this holy life would last long and endure for a long time, thereby conducing to the wellbeing and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the wellbeing and the happiness of gods and men.

And what, monks, are those *dhammas* I have preached with higher knowledge that you should cultivate, develop and practice thoroughly, so that this holy life would last long and endure for a long time, thereby conducing to the wellbeing and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the wellbeing and the happiness of gods and men?

They are the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right endeavours, the four bases for success, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the noble eightfold path".

This group of *dhammas*, collectively known as the thirty-seven participative factors of enlightenment illustrates the quality of leading onwards according to the twin principles of relativity and pragmatism.

It is customary in the present age to define the *Dhamma* from an academic point of view as constituting a set of canonical texts, but here in this context in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, at such a crucial juncture as the final passing away, we find the Buddha defining the *Dhamma* from a practical point of view, laying emphasis on the practice. It is as if the Buddha is entrusting to the monks a tool-kit before his departure.

The thirty-seven participative factors of enlightenment are comparable to a tool-kit, or rather, an assemblage of seven tool-kits. Each of these seven is well arranged with an inner consistency. Let us now examine them.

First comes the four foundations of mindfulness. This group of *dhammas* deserves pride of place due to its fundamental importance. The term *satipaṭṭhāna* has been variously interpreted by scholars, some with reference to the term *paṭṭhāna* and others connecting it with *upaṭṭhāna*. It seems more natural to associate it with the word *paṭṭhāna*, "foundation", as the basis for the practice. *Upaṭṭhita sati* is a term for one who has mastered mindfulness, based on the four foundations, as for instance in the aphorism *upaṭṭhitasatissāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo muṭṭhasatissa*,¹² "this *Dhamma* is for one who is attended by mindfulness, not for one who has lost it."

The four foundations themselves exhibit an orderly arrangement. The four are termed:

- *kāyānupassanā*, contemplation on the body,
- *vedanānupassanā*, contemplation on feelings,
- *cittānupassanā*, contemplation on the mind, and
- *dhammānupassanā*, contemplation on mind-objects.

So here we have a basis for the exercise of mindfulness beginning with a gross object, gradually leading on to subtler objects. It is easy enough to contemplate on the body. As one goes on setting up mindfulness on the body, one becomes more aware of feelings and makes them, too, the object of mindfulness. This gradual process need not be interpreted as so many cut and dried separate stages. There is a subtle imperceptible interconnection between these four foundations themselves.

To one who has practiced contemplation on the body, not only pleasant and unpleasant feelings, but also neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, imperceptible to ordinary people, becomes an object for mindfulness. So

also are the subtler distinctions between worldly, *sāmisā*, and unworldly, *nirāmisā*, feelings.

As one progresses to *cittānupassanā*, contemplation on the mind, one becomes aware of the colour-light system of the mind in response to feelings, the alternations between a lustful mind, *sarāgaṃ cittaṃ*, a hateful mind, *sadosaṃ cittaṃ*, and a deluded mind, *samohaṃ cittaṃ*, as well as their opposites.

Further on in his practice he becomes conversant with the wirings underlying this colour-light system of the mind and the know-how necessary for controlling it. With *dhammānupassanā* he is gaining the skill in avoiding and overcoming negative mental states and encouraging and stabilizing positive mental states.

Let us now see whether there is any connection between the four foundations of mindfulness and the four right endeavours. For purposes of illustration we may take up the subsection on the hindrances, included under *dhammānupassanā*, contemplation on mind-objects. There we read:

*Yathā ca anuppannaṃ kāmaccandassa uppādo hoti, tañ ca pajānāti; yathā ca uppannaṃ kāmaccandassa pahānaṃ hoti tañ ca pajānāti.*¹³

"And he also understands how there comes to be the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and how there comes to be the abandoning of arisen sensual desire".

These two statements in the subsection on the hindrances could be related to the first two out of the four right endeavours:

*Anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati; uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati.*¹⁴

"For the non-arising of unarisen evil unskilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours; for the abandoning of arisen evil unskilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours."

The understanding of the hindrances is the pre-condition for this right endeavour. What we have in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* is a statement to the effect that one comprehends, *pajānāti*, the way hindrances arise as well as the way they are abandoned. Right endeavour is already implicated. With mindfulness and full awareness one sees what is happening. But that is not all. Right endeavour has to step in.

Just as the first two right endeavours are relevant to the subsection on the hindrances, the next two right endeavours could be related to the following two statements in the subsection on the enlightenment factors in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*.

*Yathā ca anuppannassa satisambojjhaṅgassa uppādo hoti, tañ ca pajānāti; yathā ca uppannassa satisambojjhaṅgassa bhāvanāpāripūrī hoti tañ ca pajānāti.*¹⁵

"And he also understands how there comes to be the arising of the unarisen mindfulness enlightenment factor, and how the arisen mindfulness enlightenment factor comes to fulfilment by development".

One can compare these two aspects of the *dhammānupassanā* section in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* with the two right endeavours on the positive side.

*Anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṅhāti padahati; uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ thitīyā asammosāya bhīyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṅhāti padahati.*¹⁶

"For the arising of unarisen skilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours; for the stability, non-remiss, increase, amplitude and fulfilment by development of arisen skilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours."

This is the right endeavour regarding skilful mental states. Why we refer to this aspect in particular is that there is at present a tendency among those who recommend *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation to overemphasize the role of attention. They seem to assert that bare attention or noticing is all that is needed. The reason for such an attitude is probably the attempt to specialize in *satipaṭṭhāna* in isolation, without reference to the rest of the thirty-seven participative factors of enlightenment.

These seven tool-kits are interconnected. From the *satipaṭṭhāna* tool-kit, the *sammappadhāna* tool-kit comes out as a matter of course. That is why bare attention is not the be all and end all of it.

Proper attention is actually the basis for right endeavour. Even when a machine is out of order, there is a need for tightening or loosening somewhere. But first of all one has to mindfully scan or scrutinize it. That is why there is no explicit reference to effort in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*. But based on that scrutiny, the four right endeavours play their role in regard to unskilful and skilful mental states. So we see the close relationship between the four foundations of mindfulness and the four right endeavours.

It is also interesting to examine the relationship between the four right endeavours and the four paths to success. We have already quoted a phrase that is commonly used with reference to all the four right endeavours, namely *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati*, "arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours".

Here we have a string of terms suggestive of striving, systematically arranged in an ascending order. *Chandaṃ janeti* refers to the interest or the desire to act. *Vāyamati* suggests effort or exercise. *Viriyaṃ ārabhati* has to do with the initial application of energy. *Cittaṃ paggaṇhāti* stands for that firmness of resolve or grit. *Padahati* signifies the final all out effort or endeavour.

These terms more or less delineate various stages in a progressive effort. One who practices the four right endeavours in course of time specializes in one or the other of the four bases for success, *iddhipāda*. That is why the four bases for success are traceable to the four right endeavours.

To illustrate the connection between the right endeavours and the four bases for success, let us take up a simile. Suppose there is a rock which we want to get out of our way. We wish to topple it over. Since our wishing it away is not enough, we put some kind of lever underneath it and see whether it responds to our wish. Even if the rock is unusually obstinate, we at least give our shoulders an exercise, *vāyamati*, in preparation for the effort.

Once we are ready, we heave slowly slowly, *viriyam ārabhati*. But then it looks as if the rock is precariously balanced, threatening to roll back. So we grit our teeth and make a firm resolve, *cittam paggaṇhāti*. Now comes the last decisive spurt. With one deep breath, well aware that it could be our last if the rock had its own way, we push it away with all our might. It is this last all out endeavour that in the highest sense is called *sammappadhāna* or right endeavour.

In the context of the right endeavour for enlightenment it is called *caturaṅgasamannāgata viriya* "effort accompanied by four factors",¹⁷ which is worded as follows:

*Kāmaṃ taco ca nahāru ca aṭṭhi ca avasissatu, sarīre upasussatu maṃsalohitaṃ, yaṃ taṃ purisathāmena purisaviriyeṇa purisaparakaṃmena pattabbaṃ na taṃ apāpuṇitvā viriyassa saṅghānaṃ bhavissati.*¹⁸

"Verily let my skin, sinews and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up in my body, but I will not relax my energy so long as I have not attained what can be attained by manly strength, by manly energy, by manly exertion."

Though as an illustration we took an ordinary worldly object, a rock, one can substitute for it the gigantic mass of suffering to make it meaningful in the context of the *Dhamma*.

It is the formula for the toppling of this mass of suffering that is enshrined in the phrase *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyam ārabhati cittam paggaṇhāti padahati*, "arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours". The four bases for success, *iddhipāda*, namely *chanda*, "desire"; *viriya*, "energy"; *citta*, "mind"; and *vīmaṃsā*, "investigation", to a great extent are already implicit in the above formula.

Clearly enough, *chandaṃ janeti* represents *chanda-iddhipāda*; *vāyamati* and *viriyam ārabhati* together stand for *viriya-iddhipāda*; while *cittam paggaṇhāti* stands for the power of determination implied by *citta-iddhipāda*.

Apparently investigation, *vīmaṃsā*, as an *iddhipāda*, has no representative in the above formula. However, in the process of mindfully going over and over again through these stages in putting forth effort one becomes an adept in the art of handling a situation. In fact, *vīmaṃsā*, or investigation, is *paññā*, or wisdom, in disguise.

Even toppling a rock is not a simple task. One has to have the knowhow in order to accomplish it. So then, all the four bases for success emerge from the four right endeavours.

What is meant by *iddhipāda*? Since the word *iddhi* is associated with psychic power,¹⁹ it is easy to mistake it as a base for psychic power. But the basic sense of *iddhi* is "success" or "proficiency". For instance, *samiddhi* means "prosperity". It is perhaps more appropriate to render it as a "base for success", because for the attainment of *Nibbāna*, also, the development of the *iddhipādas* is recommended. Going by the illustration given above, we may say in general that for all mundane and supra-mundane accomplishments, the four bases hold good to some extent or other.

In the *Iddhipādasamyutta* these four bases for success are described as four ways to accomplish the task of attaining influx-free deliverance of the mind and deliverance by wisdom.²⁰ With the experience gathered in the course of practising the fourfold right endeavour, one comes to know one's strongpoint, where one's forte lies. One might recognize *chanda*, desire or interest, as one's strongpoint and give it first place. In the case of the bases for success, it is said that even one would do, as the others fall in line.

According to the commentaries, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla of the Buddha's time belonged to the *chanda*-category, and Venerable Mogharāja had *vīmaṃsa* as his forte, excelling in wisdom.²¹ Someone might get so interested in a particular course of action and get an intense desire and tell himself: 'somehow I must do it'. To that wish the others – energy, determination and investigation – become subservient.

Another might discover that his true personality emerges in the thick of striving. So he would make energy the base for success in his quest for *Nibbāna*. Yet another has, as his strong point, a steel determination. The other three fall in line with it. One who belongs to the wisdom category is never tired of investigation. He, even literally, leaves no stone unturned if he gets curious to see what lies underneath.

The fact that there is a normative tendency for *iddhipādas* to work in unison comes to light in the description of *iddhipāda* meditation in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. For instance, in regard to *chanda-iddhipāda*, we find the descriptive initial statement.

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu chandasamādhipadhānasaṅkhārasaman-nāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti,*²² "herein, monks, a monk develops the base for success that is equipped with preparations for endeavour, arising from desire-concentration."

Now what is this *chandasamādhi* or "desire-concentration"? This strange type of concentration, not to be found in other contexts, is explained in the *Chandasutta* itself as follows:

*Chandaṃ ce, bhikkhave, bhikkhu nissāya labhati samādhiṃ labhati cittaṃ ekaggataṃ, ayaṃ vuccati chandasamādhi.*²³ "If by relying on desire, monks, a monk gets concentration, gets one-pointedness of mind, this is called 'desire-concentration'."

Due to sheer interest or desire, a monk might reach a steady state of mind, like some sort of concentration. With that as his basis, he applies himself to the four right endeavours:

So anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati; uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati; anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati; uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ṭhitiyā asammosāya bhīyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati.

"For the non-arising of unarisen evil unskilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours; for the abandoning of arisen evil unskilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours; for the arising of unarisen skilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours; for the stability, non-remiss, increase, amplitude and fulfilment by development of arisen skilful mental states he arouses a desire, makes an effort, puts forth energy, makes firm the mind and endeavours."

So here, again, the standard definition of the four right endeavours is given. The implication is that, once the base for success is ready, the four right endeavours take off from it. The four bases for success are therefore so many ways of specializing in various aspects of striving, with a view to wielding the four right endeavours all the more effectively. All the constituents of right endeavour harmoniously fall in line with the four bases for success.

Here, then, we have a concept of four types of concentrations as bases for right endeavour, *chandasaṃādhi*, desire-concentration; *viriyasaṃādhi*, energy-concentration; *cittasaṃādhi*, mind-concentration; and *vīmaṃsasasaṃādhi*, investigation-concentration.

Now what is meant by *padhāna-saṅkhārā*, "preparations for right endeavour"? It refers to the practice of the four right endeavours with one or the other base as a solid foundation. *Padhāna* is endeavour or all out effort. *Saṅkhārā* are those preparations directed towards it. Finally, the Buddha analyses the long compound to highlight its constituents.

Iti ayaṃ ca chando, ayaṃ ca chandasamādhi, ime ca padhāna-saṅkhārā; ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, chandasamādhipadhāna-saṅkhārasamannāgato iddhipādo.

"Thus this desire, and this desire-concentration, and these preparations for endeavour; this is called the base for success that is equipped with preparations for endeavour, arising from desire-concentration."

So we see how the four bases for success come out of the four right endeavours.

The relation between the four bases for success and the next tool-kit, the five faculties, *pañcīndriya*, may not be so clear. But there is an implicit connection which might need some explanation.

The five faculties here meant are faith, *saddhā*; energy, *viriya*; mindfulness, *sati*; concentration, *saṃādhi*; and wisdom, *paññā*. The four bases for success provide the proper environment for the arising of the five faculties. The term *indriya*, faculty, has connotations of dominance and control. When one has specialized in the bases for success, it is possible to give predominance to certain mental states.

Saddhā, or faith, is *chanda*, desire or interest, in disguise. It is in one who has faith and confidence that desire and interest arise. With keen

interest in skilful mental states one is impelled to take an initiative. The Buddha gives the following description of *saddhindriya*:

*Kattha ca, bhikkhave, saddhindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ? Catusu sotāpatiyaṅgesu.*²⁴ "Where, monks, is the faculty of faith to be seen? In the four factors of stream-entry."

The four factors of stream-entry, briefly stated, are as follows:

- 1) *buddhe aveccappasādena samannāgato*;
- 2) *dhamme aveccappasādena samannāgato*;
- 3) *saṅghe aveccappasādena samannāgato*;
- 4) *ariyakantehi sīlehi samannāgato.*²⁵

- 1) He is endowed with confidence born of understanding in the Buddha;
- 2) he is endowed with confidence born of understanding in the *Dhamma*;
- 3) he is endowed with confidence born of understanding in the *Saṅgha*;
- 4) he is endowed with virtues dear to the Noble Ones.

The stream-winner has a deep faith in the Buddha, in the *Dhamma* and in the *Saṅgha* that is born of understanding. His virtue is also of a higher order, since it is well based on that faith. So in the definition of the faculty of faith we have an echo of *chanda-iddhipāda*.

It can also be inferred that *viriyindriya*, the faculty of energy, also takes off from the energy base for success. We are told:

*Kattha ca, bhikkhave, viriyindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ? Catusu sammāpadhānesu.*²⁶ "And where, monks, is the faculty of energy to be seen? In the four right endeavours"

The faculty of energy is obviously nurtured by the four right endeavours and the four bases for success.

The antecedents of *satindriya*, the faculty of mindfulness, may not be so obvious. But from the stage of *satipaṭṭhāna* onwards it has played its silent role impartially throughout almost unseen. Here, too, it stands in the middle of the group of leaders without taking sides. In fact, its role is the preserving of the balance of power between those who are on either side, the balancing of faculties.

About the place of *satindriya* the Buddha says: *Kattha ca, bhikkhave, satindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ? Catusu satipaṭṭhānesu.* "And where, monks, is the faculty of mindfulness to be seen? In the four foundations of mindfulness" It is the same four foundations, now reinforced by greater experience in vigilance.

Then comes the faculty of concentration, *samādhindriya*. We already had a glimpse of it at the *iddhipāda*-stage as *chandasaṃādhi*, desire-concentration; *viriyasaṃādhi*, energy-concentration; *cittasaṃādhi*, mind-concentration; and *vīmaṃsasamādhī*, investigation-concentration. But it was only a steadiness or stability that serves as a make shift launching pad for concentrated effort. But here in this context *samādhindriya* has a more refined sense. It is formally defined with reference to the four *jhānic* attainments.

Kattha ca, bhikkhave, samādhindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ? Catusu jhānesu. "And where, monks, is the faculty of concentration to be seen? In the four absorptions."

Sometimes, rather exceptionally, another definition is also given: *Idha, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako vossaggārammaṇaṃ karitvā labhati samādhiṃ labhati cittassa'ekaggaṭaṃ.*²⁷ "Herein, monks, a noble disciple gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind, having made release its object". However, it is by the development of the bases for success that concentration emerges as a full-fledged faculty.

Lastly, there is the faculty of wisdom, *paññindriya*. Though it has some relation to *vīmaṃsā* or investigation as a base for success, it is defined directly with reference to the four noble truths.

*Kattha ca, bhikkhave, paññindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ? Catusu ariya-saccesu.*²⁸ "And where, monks, is the faculty of wisdom to be seen? In the four noble truths."

Nevertheless, in the four noble truths, too, we see some parallelism with the illustration for *iddhipādas* we picked up. Suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path to its cessation is comparable to our reactions to our encounter with that stumbling block – the rock. In the context of insight, *paññindriya* is defined in terms of the knowledge of rise and fall, *udayatthagāmini paññā*.²⁹

The sharpness of faculties may vary from person to person, according to their *saṃsāric* background. The Buddha, who could see this difference between persons, *puggalavemattatā*, was able to tame them easily.

As we have already mentioned, mindfulness is in the middle of this group of faculties. Being the main stay of the entire *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, it renders a vigilant service in silence here too, as the arbiter in the struggle for power between the two factions on either side. Now that they

have the dominance, *saddhā*, faith, and *paññā*, wisdom, drag to either side, wishing to go their own way. Mindfulness has to strike a balance between them. Likewise *virīya*, energy, and *samādhi*, concentration, left to themselves tend to become extravagant and mindfulness has to caution them to be moderate. So in this tool-kit of faculties, *sati* is the spanner for tightening or loosening, for relaxing or gripping.

Alternatively one can discern another orderly arrangement among these five faculties. In the *Indriyasamyyutta* Venerable Sāriputta extols the wonderful inner coherence between these faculties before the Buddha in the following words:

Saddhassa hi, bhante, ariyasāvakaṃ etaṃ pāṭikaṅkhaṃ yaṃ āradhaviṛiyo viharissati akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya, kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ upasampadāya, thāmava daḥaparakkamo anikkhattadhuro kusalesu dhammesu. Yaṃ hissa, bhante, virīyaṃ tadassa viriyindriyaṃ.

Saddhassa hi, bhante, ariyasāvakaṃ āradhaviṛiyassa etaṃ pāṭikaṅkhaṃ yaṃ satimā bhavissati, paramena satinepakkena samannāgato, cīrkatampi cīrabhāsītampi saritā anussaritā. Yā hissa, bhante, sati tadassa satindriyaṃ.

Saddhassa hi, bhante, ariyasāvakaṃ āradhaviṛiyassa upaṭṭhitatino etaṃ pāṭikaṅkhaṃ yaṃ vossaggāramaṇaṃ kartivā labhissati samādhiṃ labhissati cittassa ekaggaṃ. Yo hissa, bhante, samādhi tadassa samādhindriyaṃ.

Saddhassa hi, bhante, ariyasāvakaṃ āradhaviṛiyassa upaṭṭhitatino samāhitacittassa etaṃ pāṭikaṅkhaṃ yaṃ evaṃ pajānissati: ‘anamataggo kho saṃsāro, pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsaṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsarataṃ. Avijjāya tveva tamokāyassa asesavirāganīrodho santam etaṃ padaṃ paṇītam etaṃ padaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhakkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ. Yā hissa, bhante, paññā tadassa paññindriyaṃ.’³⁰

"It could indeed be expected, Venerable Sir, of a noble disciple who has faith that he will dwell with energy put forth for the abandoning of unskilful states and the arising of skilful states, that he will be steady, resolute in exertion, not shirking the burden of fulfilling skilful states. That energy of his, Venerable Sir, is his faculty of energy.

It could indeed be expected, Venerable Sir, of that noble disciple who has faith and who has put forth energy that he will be mindful, endowed with supreme adeptness in mindfulness, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said even long ago. That mindfulness of his, Venerable Sir, is his faculty of mindfulness.

It could indeed be expected, Venerable Sir, of that noble disciple who has faith, who has put forth energy and who is attended by mindfulness that he will gain concentration, will gain one-pointedness of mind, having made release the object. That concentration of his, Venerable Sir, is his faculty of concentration.

It could indeed be expected, Venerable Sir, of that noble disciple who has faith, who has put forth energy, who is attended by mindfulness and whose mind is concentrated that he will understand thus: 'This *saṃsāra* is without a conceivable beginning, a first point is not discernable of beings roaming and wandering, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. But the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, the mass of darkness, this is the peaceful state, this is the excellent state, that is, the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction. That wisdom of his, Venerable Sir, is his faculty of wisdom.'

¹ M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.

² M I 134, *Alagaddūpamasutta*.

³ M I 260, *MahāTaṇhāsaṅkhayasutta*.

⁴ S V 90, *Udāyisutta*.

⁵ A V 2, *Cetanākaraṇīyasutta*.

⁶ S IV 41, *Upavāṇasandiṭṭhikasutta*.

⁷ A III 39, *Sīhasenāpattisutta*; see sermon 19.

⁸ e.g. M I 76, *MahāSīhanādasutta*.

⁹ S I 9, *Samiddhisutta*.

¹⁰ S V 90, *Udāyisutta*.

¹¹ D II 119, *Mahāparinibbānasutta*.

¹² D III 287, *Dasuttarasutta*.

¹³ M I 60, *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*.

¹⁴ e.g. D III, 221, *Saṅgītisutta*.

¹⁵ M I 62, *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*.

¹⁶ e.g. D III, 221, *Saṅgītisutta*.

¹⁷ e.g. Ps III 194.

¹⁸ M I 481, *Kīṭāgirisutta*.

¹⁹ S V 276, *Bhikkhusutta*; S V 286, *Ānandasutta* 1&2; S V 287, *Bhikkhusutta* 1&2.

²⁰ S V 266, *Pubbesutta*.

²¹ Sv II 642, which further mentions Venerable Soṇa as an example for energy and Venerable Sambhūta as an example for the category of the mind.

²² e.g. SN V 255, *Aparāsutta*.

²³ S V 268, *Chandasutta*.

²⁴ S V 196, *Daṭṭhabbasutta*.

²⁵ S V 343, *Rājasutta*.

²⁶ S V 196, *Daṭṭhabbasutta*.

²⁷ S V 197, *Vibhaṅgasutta*.

²⁸ S V 196, *Daṭṭhabbasutta*.

²⁹ S V 197, *Vibhaṅgasutta*.

³⁰ S V 225, *Āpaṇasutta*.

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

*Etaṃ santam, etaṃ paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam.*¹

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

With the permission of the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the thirty-second sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

In the course of our last sermon, we took up the position that the seven groups of doctrinal categories collectively known as the thirty-seven participative factors of enlightenment follow an extremely practical and systematic order of arrangement. By way of proof, we discussed at some length the inner consistency evident within each group and the way the different groups are related to each other.

So far, we have pointed out how the setting up of mindfulness through the four foundations of mindfulness serves as a solid basis for the four ways of putting forth energy, by the four right endeavours; and how the progressive stages in putting forth energy, outlined by the four right endeavours, give rise to the four bases for success. It was while discussing the way in which the four bases for success are helpful in arousing the five faculties, like faith, that we had to stop our last sermon.

It should be sufficiently clear, after our discussion the other day, that the four factors desire, energy, determination and investigation could be made the base for success in any venture. The five faculties, however, are directly relevant to *Nibbāna*. That is why faith is given pride of place among the faculties. *Saddhindriya*, or the faculty of faith, takes the lead, which is obviously related to *chanda*, desire or interest. But the element of faith in *saddhindriya* is defined at a higher level. In this context, it is reckoned as the firm faith characteristic of the stream-winner.

Then comes the faculty of energy, *viriyindriya*. Though apparently it is yet another occurrence of the term, *viriya* in this context is that element of

energy weathered and reinforced by its fourfold application as a base for success, *iddhipāda*.

As for *samādhi* or concentration, we already came across the terms *chandasamādhi*, *viriyasamādhi*, *cittasamādhi* and *vīmaṃsāsamādhi* in the description of the development of the bases for success. The concentration meant by *samādhi* in that context is actually a one-pointedness of the mind, *cittekaggatā*, which could be made the basis for arousing energy. But the level of concentration envisaged by the concentration faculty, *samādhindriya*, is of a higher grade as far as its potential is concerned. It is defined as the first four *jhānas*, based on which one can develop insight and attain *Nibbāna*. In fact, there is a statement to that effect:

Idha, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako vossaggārammaṇam karitvā labhati samādhiṃ, labhati cittassa ekaggataṃ, "herein, monks, a noble disciple gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind, having made the release [of *Nibbāna*] its object."² The term *vossagga* connotes *Nibbāna* as a giving up or relinquishment. So the concentration faculty is that concentration which is directed towards *Nibbāna*.

Similarly the wisdom faculty, as defined here, is of the highest degree, pertaining to the understanding of the four noble truths. Sometimes it is called the "noble penetrative wisdom of rise and fall", *udayatthagāminī paññā ariyā nibbedhikā*. By implication, it is equivalent to the factor called *vīmaṃsā*, investigation, we came across in our discussion of the bases for success. As a faculty, it comes out full-fledged in the guise of wisdom.

The mindfulness faculty, which stands in the middle, fulfils a very important function. Now in the context of the four foundations of mindfulness, the role of mindfulness is the simple task of being aware of the appropriate object presented to it. But here in this domain of faculties, mindfulness has attained lordship and fulfils an important function. It maintains the balance between the two sets of pair-wise faculties, by equalizing faith with wisdom and energy with concentration.

This function of balancing of faculties, which mindfulness fulfils, has a special practical value. To one who is striving for *Nibbāna*, balancing of faculties could sometimes be an intricate problem, since it is more easily said than done.

In order to unravel this problem, let us take up the simile of the rock, we employed the other day. We discussed the question of toppling a rock as an illustration to understand the various stages in the four-fold right endeavour. We distinguished the five stages in putting forth effort in the phrase *chandaṃ janeti, vāyamati, viriyaṃ ārabhati, cittaṃ paggaṇhāti, padahati* with the help of that illustration. Out of these stages, the last one represented by the word *padahati* shows the climax. *Padhāna* or endeavour is the highest grade of effort.

Even verbally it implies something like toppling a rock, which requires a high degree of momentum. This momentum has to be built up mindfully and gradually. That rock, in our illustration, was levered up with great difficulty. After it was levered up, there came that dangerous situation, when it threatened to roll back. It called for that supreme purposeful effort, which required the zeal of self sacrifice. That zealous endeavour is made at the risk of one's body and life. But even there, one has to be cautious and mindful. If excessive energy is applied in that last heave, one would be thrown off head over heels after the rock. If insufficient energy is applied the rock would roll back and one would get crushed. That is why a balancing is needed before the last spurt. Right endeavour has to be preceded by a balancing.

It is this preliminary balancing that finds mention in a certain highly significant statement in the *Caṅkīsutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where we are told how a person arouses faith in the *Dhamma* and gradually develops it and puts forth effort and endeavour and attains *Nibbāna*. To quote the relevant section of that long sentence: *chandajāto ussahati, ussahitvā tuleti, tulayitvā padahati, pahitatto samāno kāyena ceva paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca naṃ ativiḥḥa passati*,³ "having aroused a desire or keen interest, he strives; having strived, he balances; having balanced or equalized, he endeavours; and with that endeavour he realizes the highest truth by his body and penetrates into it with wisdom."

Unfortunately, the key word here, *tulayati* or *tuleti*, is explained in a different way in the commentary. It is interpreted as a reference to contemplation on insight, *aniccādivasena tīreti*, "adjudges as impermanent etc."⁴

But if we examine the word within the context here, as it occurs between *ussahati*, "strives" (literally "bearing up" or "enduring"), and *padahati*, "endeavours", the obvious meaning is "equalizing" or "balancing". *Tuleti* has connotations of weighing and judging, and one who strives to lift up a rock needs to know how heavy it is and how much effort is required to topple it. By merely looking at the rock, without trying to lift it up, one cannot say how much effort is needed to topple it. One has to put one's shoulder to it. In fact the word *ussahati* is suggestive of enduring effort with which one bears up.

Sometimes the Buddha uses the term *ussolhi* to designate that steadily enduring effort - literally, the bearing up. A clear instance of the occurrence of this term in this sense can be found among the Eights of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* in a discourse on the recollection of death, *maraṇasati*. The *Sutta* is an exhortation to the monks to make use of the recollection of death to reflect on one's unskilful mental states daily in the morning and in the evening with a view to strengthen one's determination to abandon them. For instance, we find the following exhortation:

*Sace, bhikkhave, bhikkhu paccavekkhamāno evaṃ pajānāti: 'atthi me pāpakā akusalā dhammā appahīnā ye me assu rattiṃ kālaṃ karontassa antarāyāyā'ti, tena, bhikkhave, bhikkhunā tesam yeva pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya adhimatto chando ca vāyāmo ca ussāho ca ussolhi ca appaṭivānī ca sati ca sampajaññaṃ karaṇīyaṃ.'*⁵

"If, monks, upon reflection a monk understands: 'There are in me unabandoned evil unskilful states which could spell danger to me if I die today', then, monks, for the abandonment of those very evil unskilful states that monk should arouse a high degree of desire, effort, striving, enduring effort, unremitting effort, mindfulness and full awareness."

The sequence of terms *chando*, *vāyāmo*, *ussāho*, *ussolhi*, *appaṭivānī*, *sati* and *sampajañña* is particularly significant in this long sentence. *Chanda* is that desire to abandon evil unskilful states, *vāyāma* is the initial effort, *ussāha* is literally putting the shoulder to the task, *ussolhi* is bearing it up with endurance, *appaṭivānī* is unshrinking effort or unremitting effort. *Sati* is that mindfulness and *sampajañña* that full awareness which are indispensable in this sustained unremitting endeavour.

If a better illustration is needed to clarify the idea of balancing, prior to the final endeavour, we may take the case of lifting a log of wood. Here we have an actual lifting up or putting one's shoulder to it. Without lifting up a log of wood and putting one's shoulder to it, one cannot get to know the art of balancing. If, for instance, the log of wood is thick at one end and thin at the other end, one cannot locate the centre of gravity at a glance. So one puts one's shoulder to one end and goes on lifting it up. It is when one reaches the centre of gravity that one is able to balance it on one's shoulder and take it away. It is because we are looking at this question of balancing of faculties from a practical point of view that we made this detour in explanation.

So, then, the mindfulness faculty is also performing a very important function among these faculties. From the *Saddhāsutta* we quoted the other day we could see that there is also a gradual arrangement in this group of five faculties. That is to say, in a person with faith, energy arises. One who is energetic is keen on developing mindfulness. In one who is mindful, concentration grows; and one who has concentration attains wisdom.

This gradual arrangement becomes all the more meaningful since the faculty of wisdom is declared the chief among the faculties. In the *Indriya Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* the Buddha gives a number of similes to show that the wisdom faculty is supreme in this group. Just as the lion is supreme among animals, and the footprint of the elephant is the biggest of all footprints, the wisdom faculty is supreme among faculties.⁶ The Buddha even goes on to point out that until the wisdom faculty steps in, the other four faculties do not get established. This he makes clear by the simile of the gabled hall in the *Mallikasutta* of the *Indriya Saṃyutta*.

"Just as, monks, in a gabled hall, so long as the roof peak has not been raised, the rafters are not conjoined, the rafters are not held in place, even so, as long as the noble knowledge has not arisen in a noble disciple, the four faculties are not conjoined, the four faculties are not held in place".⁷

Until one becomes a stream-winner, the five faculties do not get established in him, since the wisdom faculty is so integral. At least one has to be on the path to attaining the fruit of a stream-winner. It is said that the five faculties are to be found only in the eight noble persons, the four treading on the paths to the four fruits and the four who have attained

the fruits of the path, *cattāro ca paṭipannā*, *cattāro ca phale ʔhitā*. In others, they are weak and not properly harnessed. It is in the *arahant* that the wisdom faculty is found in its strongest form. In the other grades of supramundane attainment, they are weaker by degrees. The lowest grade is the one treading the path to stream-winning. In the worldlying they are not at all to be found, in any way, *sabbena sabbam sabbathā sabbam n'atthi*.⁸

Next comes the group of five powers. As to their function, some explanation might be necessary, though it seems simple enough. As we have already mentioned, the term *indriya* connotes kingship or lordship. Faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom were elevated to the position of a king or lord. They have attained sovereignty. So now they are exercising their power. For what purpose? To put down the evil unskilful mental states that rise in revolt against *Nibbāna*. The noble disciple uses the same faculties as powers to fight out the hindrances and break the fetters. That is why among the participative factors of enlightenment they are represented as powers, by virtue of their special function.

Then we come to the category called seven factors of enlightenment. A high degree of importance is attached to this particular group. It has an orderly arrangement. The constituents are: *sati*, mindfulness; *dhammavicaya*, investigation of states; *virīya*, energy; *pīti*, joy; *passaddhi*, calmness; *samādhi*, concentration; *upekkhā*, equanimity. In this group of seven, mindfulness takes precedence. In fact, the arrangement resembles the mobilization for winning that freedom of *Nibbāna*. The *bojjhaṅgā*, factors of enlightenment, are so-called because they are conducive to enlightenment, *bodhāya saṃvattanti*.⁹

Sati leads the way and at the same time marshals the squad. Three members of the group, namely *dhammavicaya*, *virīya* and *pīti* are by nature restless, while the other three, *passaddhi*, *samādhi* and *upekkhā* are rather slack. They have to be marshalled and properly aligned, and *sati* comes to the forefront for that purpose. At the same time, one can discern an orderly arrangement within this group. Right from the stage of the four foundations of mindfulness, the same term *sati* seems to occur down the line, but its function differs in different contexts. Now in this context, it is specifically called a *bojjhaṅga*, a factor of enlightenment. The phrase

satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti, "he develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness", is directly used with reference to it here.

When one develops a particular meditation subject, whether it be mindfulness of breathing, *ānāpānasati*, or even one of the four divine abidings of loving kindness, *mettā*, compassion, *karuṇā*, altruistic joy, *muditā*, or equanimity, *upekkhā*, one can arouse these enlightenment factors. That is why we come across, in the *Indriya Saṃyutta*, for instance, such statements as the following:

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu mettāsahagataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.*¹⁰ "Herein monks, a monk develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness imbued with loving kindness, based upon seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release".

All the four terms *viveka*, seclusion, *virāga*, dispassion, *nirodha*, cessation, and *vossagga*, release, are suggestive of *Nibbāna*. So, *satisambojjhaṅga* implies the development of mindfulness as an enlightenment factor, directed towards the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

What follows in the wake of the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, once it is aroused, is the enlightenment factor of investigation of states, *dhammavicayasambojjhaṅga*, which in fact is the function it fulfils. For instance, in the *Ānandasutta* we read *so tathā sato viharanto taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicarati parivīmaṃsamāpajjati*,¹¹ "dwelling thus mindfully, he investigates that mental state with wisdom, goes over it mentally and makes an examination of it." The mental state refers to the particular subject of meditation, and by investigating it with wisdom and mentally going over it and examining it, the meditator arouses energy. So, from this enlightenment factor one draws inspiration and arouses energy. It is also conducive to the development of wisdom.

This enlightenment factor of investigation of states gives rise to the enlightenment factor of energy since the mental activity implied by it keeps him wakeful and alert, as the phrase *āraddhaṃ hoti viriyam*

asallīnaṃ, "energy is stirred up and not inert", implies. To one who has stirred up energy, there arises a joy of the spiritual type, *āraddhaviriyassa uppajjati pīti nirāmisā*. Of one who is joyful in mind, the body also calms down, *pītīmanassa kāyopi passambhati*, and so too the mind, *cittampi passambhati*. The mind of one who is calm in body and blissful gets concentrated, *passaddhakāyassa sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati*.

So now the enlightenment factor of concentration has also come up. What comes after the enlightenment factor of concentration is the enlightenment factor of equanimity. About it, it is said: *so tathāsamāhitaṃ cittaṃ sādhukaṃ ajjhūpekkhitā hoti*, "he rightly looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated". Once the mind is concentrated, there is no need to struggle or strive. With equanimity one has to keep watch and ward over it. As an enlightenment factor, equanimity can be evaluated from another angle. It is the proper basis for the knowledge of things as they are, *yathābhūtañāṇa*. The neutrality that goes with equanimity not only stabilizes concentration, but also makes one receptive to the knowledge of things as they are. So here we have the seven factors conducive to enlightenment.

What comes next, as the last of the seven groups, is the noble eightfold path, *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*, which is reckoned as the highest among them. There is some speciality even in the naming of this group. All the other groups show a plural ending, *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*, *cattāro sammappadhānā*, *cattāro iddhipādā*, *pañc'indriyāni*, *pañca balāni*, *satta bojjhaṅgā*, but this group has a singular ending, *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*. The collective sense is suggestive of the fact that this is the *magga-samādhi*, the path concentration. The noble eightfold path is actually the presentation of that concentration of the supramundane path with its constituents. The singular ending is therefore understandable.

This fact comes to light particularly in the *Mahācattārīsakasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It is a discourse that brings out a special analysis of the noble eightfold path. There, the Buddha explains to the monks the noble right concentration with its supportive conditions and requisite factors.

*Katamo ca, bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi sa-upaniso saporikkhāro? Seyyathidaṃ sammā diṭṭhi, sammā saṅkappo, sammā vācā, sammā kammanto, sammā ājīvo, sammā vāyāmo sammā sati, yā kho, bhikkhave, imehi sattahaṅgehi cittassa ekaggatā parikkhatā, ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi sa-upaniso iti pi saporikkhāro iti pi.*¹²

"What, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports and requisites? That is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort and right mindfulness - that unification of mind equipped with these seven factors is called noble right concentration with its supports and requisites."

So right concentration itself is the path. The singular number is used to denote the fact that it is accompanied by the requisite factors. Otherwise the plural *maggāṅgā*, factors of the path, could have been used to name this category. The unitary notion has a significance of its own. It is suggestive of the fact that here we have a unification of all the forces built up by the participative factors of enlightenment.

In this discourse, the Buddha comes out with an explanation of certain other important aspects of this noble eightfold path. The fact that right view takes precedence is emphatically stated several times, *tatra, bhikkhave, sammā diṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā*, "therein, monks, right view leads the way".

It is also noteworthy that right view is declared as twofold, *sammā diṭṭhiṃ pahaṃ dvayaṃ vadāmi*, "even right view, I say, is twofold". *Atthi, bhikkhave, sammā diṭṭhi sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā, atthi, bhikkhave, sammā diṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā*, "there is right view, monks, that is affected by influxes, on the side of merit and maturing into assets, and there is right view, monks, that is noble, influx-free, supramundane, a factor of the path."

The first type of right view, which is affected by influxes, on the side of merit and ripening in assets, is the one often met with in general in the analysis of the noble eightfold path, namely the ten-factored right view. It is known as the right view which takes *kamma* as one's own, *kammassakatā sammā diṭṭhi*. The standard definition of it runs as follows:

Atthi dinnam, atthi yittham, atthi hutam, atthi sukaṭadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko, atthi ayaṃ loko, atthi paro loko, atthi mātā, atthi pitā, atthi sattā opapātikā, atthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṅca lokaṃ paraṅca lokaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedenti.

"There is [an effectiveness] in what is given, what is offered and what is sacrificed, there is fruit and result of good and bad deeds, there is this world and the other world, there is mother and father, there are beings who are reborn spontaneously, there are in the world rightly treading and rightly practising recluses and Brahmins who have realized by themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world."

This right view is still with influxes, it is on the side of merits and is productive of *saṃsāric* assets. About this right view, this discourse has very little to say. In this *Sutta*, the greater attention is focussed on that right view which is noble, influx-free, supramundane, and constitutes a factor of the path. It is explained as the right view that comes up at the supramundane path moment. It is noble, *ariyā*, influx-free, *anāsavā*, and conducive to transcendence of the world, *lokuttarā*. It is defined as follows:

Yā kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato paññā paññindriyaṃ paññābalaṃ dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo sammādiṭṭhi maggaṅgā, ayaṃ, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā.

"Monks that wisdom, that faculty of wisdom, that power of wisdom, that investigation of states enlightenment factor, that path factor of right view in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is influx-free, who has the noble path and is developing the noble path, that is the right view which is noble, influx-free and supramundane, a factor of the path."

All these synonymous terms are indicative of that wisdom directed towards *Nibbāna* in that noble disciple. They are representative of the element of wisdom maintained from the faculty stage upwards in his systematic development of the enlightenment factors.

It is also noteworthy that, in connection with the supramundane aspect of the path factors, four significant qualifying terms are always cited, as, for instance, in the following reference to right view:

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sammādit̥ṭhiṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ vi-rāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ,*¹³ "herein, monks, a monk develops right view which is based upon seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release."

This is the higher grade of right view, which aims at *Nibbāna*. It implies the wisdom of the four noble truths, that noble wisdom which sees the rise and fall, *udayatthagāmini paññā*. The line of synonymous terms quoted above clearly indicates that the noble eightfold path contains, within it, all the faculties, powers and enlightenment factors so far developed. This is not a mere citation of apparent synonyms for an academic purpose. It brings out the fact that at the path moment the essence of all the wisdom that systematically got developed through the five faculties, the five powers and the seven enlightenment factors surfaces in the noble disciple to effect the final breakthrough.

The two-fold definition given by the Buddha is common to the first five factors of the path: right view, right thought, right speech, right action and right livelihood. That is to say, all these factors have an aspect that can be called "tinged with influxes", *sa-āsava*, "on the side of merit", *puññabhāgiya*, and "productive of *samsāric* assets", *upadhivepakka*, as well as an aspect that deserves to be called "noble", *ariya*, "influx-free", *anāsava*, "supramundane", *lokuttara*, "a constituent factor of the path", *maggāṅga*.

The usual definition of the noble eightfold path is well known. A question might arise as to the part played by right speech, right action and right livelihood at the arising of the supramundane path. Their role at the path moment is described as an abstinence from the four kinds of verbal misconduct, an abstinence from the three kinds of bodily misconduct, and an abstinence from wrong livelihood. The element of abstinence therein implied is conveyed by such terms as *ārati virati paṭivirati veramaṇī*, "desisting from, abstaining, refraining, abstinence". It is the very thought of abstaining that represents the three factors at the path moment and not their physical counterparts. That is to say, the act of refraining has already been accomplished.

So then we are concerned only with the other five factors of the path. Out of them, three factors are highlighted as running around and circling around each of these five for the purpose of their fulfilment, namely right

view, right effort and right mindfulness. This running around and circling around, conveyed by the two terms *anuparidhāvanti* and *anuparivattanti*, is extremely peculiar in this context.

The role of these three states might be difficult for one to understand. Perhaps, as an illustration, we may take the case of a VIP, a very important person, being conducted through a crowd with much pomp. One ushers him in with his vanguard, another brings up the rear with his bandwagon while yet another is at hand as the bodyguard-cum-attendant. So also at the path moment right view shows the way, right effort gives the boost, while right mindfulness attends at hand.

These security forces keep the wrong side, *micchā*, of the path factors in check. The precedence of right view is a salient feature of the noble eightfold path. The Buddha makes special mention of it, pointing out at the same time the inner consistency of its internal arrangement.

*Tatra, bhikkhave, sammā dīṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathañca, bhikkhave, sammā dīṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Sammā dīṭṭhissa, bhikkhave, sammā saṅkappo pahoti, sammā saṅkappassa sammā vācā pahoti, sammā vācassa sammā kammanto pahoti, sammā kammantassa sammā ājīvo pahoti, sammā ājīvassa sammā vāyāmo pahoti, sammā vāyāmassa sammā sati pahoti, sammā satissa sammā samādhi pahoti, sammā samādhissa sammā nāṇam pahoti, sammā nāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti. Iti kho, bhikkhave, aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgato sekho pāṭipado, dasaṅgasamannāgato arahā hoti.*¹⁴

"Therein, monks, right view comes first. And how, monks, does right view come first? In one of right view, right intention arises. In one of right intention, right speech arises. In one of right speech, right action arises. In one of right action, right livelihood arises. In one of right livelihood, right effort arises. In one of right effort, right mindfulness arises. In one of right mindfulness, right concentration arises. In one of right concentration, right knowledge arises. In one of right knowledge, right deliverance arises. Thus, monks, the disciple in higher training possessed of eight factors becomes an *arahant* when possessed of the ten factors."

The fundamental importance of right view as the forerunner is highlighted by the Buddha in some discourses. In a particular discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, it is contrasted with the negative role of wrong view.

*Micchādiṭṭhikassa, bhikkhave, purisapuggalassa yañceva kāyakammaṃ yathādiṭṭhi samattaṃ samādinnaṃ yañca vacīkammaṃ yathādiṭṭhi samattaṃ samādinnaṃ yañca manokammaṃ yathādiṭṭhi samattaṃ samādinnaṃ yā ca cetanā yā ca patthanā yo ca pañidhi ye ca saṅkhārā sabbe te dhammā aniṭṭhaya akantāya amanāpāya ahitāya dukkhāya saṃvattanti. Taṃ kissa hetu? Diṭṭhi hi, bhikkhave, pāpikā.*¹⁵

"Monks, in the case of a person with wrong view, whatever bodily deed he does accords with the view he has grasped and taken up, whatever verbal deed he does accords with the view he has grasped and taken up, whatever mental deed he does accords with the view he has grasped and taken up, whatever intention, whatever aspiration, whatever determination, whatever preparations he makes, all those mental states conduce to unwelcome, unpleasant, unwholesome, disagreeable and painful consequences. Why is that? The view, monks, is evil."

Due to the evil nature of the view, all what follows from it partakes of an evil character. Then he gives an illustration for it.

Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, nimbabījaṃ vā kosātakībījaṃ vā tittakalābubījaṃ vā allāya paṭhaviyā nikkhittaṃ yañceva paṭhavirasam upādiyati yañca āporasaṃ upādiyati sabbaṃ taṃ tittakattāya kaṭukattāya asātattāya saṃvattati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Bījaṃ hi, bhikkhave, pāpakaṃ.

"Just as, monks, in the case of a margosa seed or a bitter gourd seed, or a long gourd seed thrown on wet ground, whatever taste of the earth it draws in, whatever taste of the water it draws in, all that conduces to bitterness, to sourness, to unpleasantness. Why is that? The seed, monks, is bad."

Then he makes a similar statement with regard to right view.

Sammādiṭṭhikassa, bhikkhave, purisapuggalassa yañceva kāyakammaṃ yathādiṭṭhi samattaṃ samādinnaṃ yañca vacīkammaṃ yathādiṭṭhi samattaṃ samādinnaṃ yañca manokammaṃ yathādiṭṭhi samattaṃ samādinnaṃ yā ca cetanā yā ca patthanā yo ca pañidhi ye ca saṅkhārā sabbe te dhammā iṭṭhaya kantāya manāpāya hitāya sukhāya saṃvattanti. Taṃ kissa hetu? Diṭṭhi hi, bhikkhave, bhaddikā.

"Monks, in the case of a person with right view, whatever bodily deed he does accords with the view he has grasped and taken up, whatever verbal deed he does accords with the view he has grasped and taken up, whatever mental deed he does accords with the view he has grasped and taken up, whatever intention, whatever aspiration, whatever determination, whatever preparations he makes, all those mental states conduce to welcome, pleasant, wholesome, agreeable and happy consequences. Why is that? The view, monks, is good."

Then comes the illustration for it.

Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, ucchubījaṃ vā sālībījaṃ vā muddikābījaṃ vā allāya paṭhaviyā nikkhattaṃ yañceva paṭhavirasaṃ upādiyati yañca āporasaṃ upādiyati sabbam taṃ madhurattāya sātattāya asecanakattāya saṃvattati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Bijaṃ hi, bhikkhave, bhaddakaṃ.

"Just as, monks, in the case of a sugar cane seedling or a sweet paddy seed, or a grape seed thrown on wet ground, whatever taste of the earth it draws in, whatever taste of the water it draws in, all that conduces to sweetness, agreeableness and deliciousness. Why is that? The seed, monks, is excellent."

This explains why the noble eightfold path begins with right view. This precedence of view is not to be found in the other groups of participative factors of enlightenment. The reason for this peculiarity is the fact that view has to come first in any total transformation of personality in an individual from a psychological point of view.

A view gives rise to thoughts, thoughts issue in words, words lead to actions, and actions mould a livelihood. Livelihood forms the basis for the development of other virtues on the side of meditation, namely right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. So we find the precedence of right view as a unique feature in the noble eightfold path.

The fundamental importance of the noble eightfold path could be assessed from another point of view. It gains a high degree of recognition due to the fact that the Buddha has styled it as the middle path. For instance, in the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*, the discourse on the turning of the wheel, the middle path is explicitly defined as the noble eightfold path. It is sufficiently well known that the noble eightfold path has been called the middle path by the Buddha. But the basic idea behind this definition has not always been correctly understood.

In the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta* the Buddha has presented the noble eightfold path as a middle path between the two extremes called *kāmasukhallikānuyogo*, the pursuit of sensual pleasure, and *attakilamathānuyogo*, the pursuit of self-mortification.¹⁶

The concept of a 'middle' might make one think that the noble eightfold path is made up by borrowing fifty per cent from each of the two extremes, the pursuit of sense pleasures and the pursuit of self-mortification. But it is not such a piecemeal solution. There are deeper implications involved. The *Mahācattārīsakasutta* in particular brings out the true depth of this middle path. Instead of grafting half of one extreme to half of the other, the Buddha rejected the wrong views behind both those pursuits and, avoiding the pitfalls of both, presented anew a middle path in the form of the noble eightfold path.

By way of clarification, we may draw attention to the fact that one inclines to the pursuit of sense pleasures by taking one's stance on the annihilationist view. It amounts to the idea that there is no rebirth and that one can indulge in sense pleasures unhindered by ethical considerations of good and evil. It inculcates a nihilistic outlook characterized by a long line of negatives.

In contradistinction to it, we have the affirmative standpoint forming the lower grade of the right view referred to above, namely the right view which takes *kamma* as one's own, *kammasakatā sammā diṭṭhi*. The positive outlook in this right view inculcates moral responsibility and forms the basis for skilful or meritorious deeds. That is why it is called *puññabhāgiya*, on the side of merits. By implication, the nihilistic outlook, on the other hand, is on the side of demerit, lacking a basis for skilful action.

In our analysis of the law of dependent arising, also, we happened to mention the idea of a middle path. But that is from the philosophical standpoint. Here we are concerned with the ethical aspect of the middle path. As far as the ethical requirements are concerned, a nihilistic view by itself does not entitle one to deliverance. Why? Because the question of

influxes is there to cope with. So long as the influxes of sensuality, *kāmāsavā*, of becoming, *bhavāsavā*, and of ignorance, *avijjāsavā*, are there, one cannot escape the consequences of action merely by virtue of a nihilistic view. That is why the Buddha took a positive stand on those ten postulates. Where the nihilist found an excuse for indulgence in sensuality by negating, the Buddha applied a corrective by asserting. This affirmative stance took care of one extremist trend.

But the Buddha did not stop there. In the description of the higher grade of right view we came across the terms *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā*. In the case of the lower grade it is *sa-āsavā*, with influxes, here it is *anāsavā*, influx-free. At whatever moment the mind develops that strength to withstand the influxes, one is not carried away by worldly conventions. That is why the right view at the supramundane path moment is called influx-free. There is an extremely subtle point involved in this distinction. This noble influx-free right view, that is a constituent of the supramundane path, *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā*, is oriented towards cessation, *nirodha*. The right view that takes *kamma* as one's own, *kammasakatā sammā diṭṭhi*, on the other hand is oriented towards arising, *samudaya*.

Due to the fact that the right view at the path moment is oriented towards cessation we find it qualified with the terms *vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ*, "based upon seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release". It is this orientation towards *Nibbāna* that paves the way for the signless, *animitta*, the undirected, *appaṇihita*, and the void, *suññata*. We have already discussed at length about them in our previous sermons. Perhaps, while listening to them, some might have got scared at the thought 'so then there is not even a mother or a father'. That is why the word *suññatā*, voidness, drives terror into those who do not understand it properly. Here we see the depth of the Buddha's middle path. That right view with influxes, *sa-āsavā*, is on the side of merits, *puññabhāgiya*, not demerit, *apuñña*.

If the Buddha sanctions demerit, he could have endorsed the nihilistic view that there is no this world or the other world, no mother or father. But due to the norm of *kamma* which he explained in such terms as *kammassakā sattā kammadāyādā kammayonī kammabandhū*,¹⁷ "beings have *kamma* as their own, they are inheritors of *kamma*, *kamma* is their matrix, *kamma* is their relative", so long as ignorance and craving are there, beings take their stand on convention and go on accumulating *kamma*. They have to pay for it. They have to suffer the consequences.

Though with influxes, *sa-āsava*, that right view is on the side of merit, *puññabhāgiya*, which mature into *saṃsāric* assets, *upadhivepakka*, in the form of the conditions in life conducive even to the attainment of *Nibbāna*. That kind of right view is preferable to the nihilistic view, although it is of a second grade.

But then there is the other side of the *saṃsāric* problem. One cannot afford to stagnate there. There should be a release from it as a permanent solution. That is where the higher grade of right view comes in, the noble influx-free right view which occurs as a factor of the path. It is then that the terms *animitta*, signless, *appaṇihita*, the undirected and *suññata*, the void, become meaningful.

When the mind is weaned away from the habit of grasping signs, from determining and from the notion of self-hood, the three doorways to deliverance, the signless, the undirected and the void, would open up for an exit from this *saṃsāric* cycle. The cessation of existence is *Nibbāna*, *bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ*. Here, then, we have the reason why the noble eightfold path is called the middle path.

In the life of a meditator, also, the concept of a middle path could sometimes give rise to doubts and indecision. One might wonder whether one should strive hard or lead a comfortable life. A midway solution between the two might be taken as the middle path. But the true depth of the middle path emerges from the above analysis of the twofold definition of the noble eightfold path. It is because of this depth of the middle path that the Buddha made the following declaration in the *Aggappasādasutta* of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*:

Yāvata, bhikkhave, dhammā saṅkhatā, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo tesam aggam akkhāyati.¹⁸ "Monks, whatever prepared things there are, the noble eightfold path is called the highest among them".

It is true that the noble eightfold path is something prepared and that is why we showed its relation to causes and conditions. Whatever is prepared is not worthwhile, and yet, it is by means of this prepared noble eightfold path that the Buddha clears the path to the unprepared. This is an extremely subtle truth, which only a Buddha can discover and proclaim to the world. It is not easy to discover it, because one tends to confuse issues by going to one extreme or another. One either resorts to the annihilationist view and ends up by giving way to indulgence in sensuality, or inclines towards the eternalist view and struggles to extricate self by self-mortification.

In the *Dhamma* proclaimed by the Buddha one can see a marvellous middle way. We have already pointed it out in earlier sermons by means of such illustrations as sharpening a razor. There is a remarkable attitude of non-grasping about the middle path, which is well expressed by the term *atammayatā*, non-identification. Relying on one thing is just for the purpose of eliminating another, as exemplified by the simile of the relay of chariots.

The key terms signifying the aim and purpose of this middle path are *vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ*, "based upon seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release". Placed in this *saṃsāric* predicament, one cannot help resorting to certain things to achieve this aim. But care is taken to see that they are not grasped or clung to. It is a process of pushing away one thing with another, and that with yet another, a *via media* based on relativity and pragmatism. The noble eightfold path marks the consummation of this process, its systematic fulfilment. That is why we tried to trace a process of a gradual development among the thirty-seven participative factors of enlightenment.

Even the internal arrangement within each group is extraordinary. There is an orderly arrangement from beginning to end in an ascending order of importance. Sometimes, an analysis could start from the middle and extend to either side. Some groups portray a gradual development towards a climax. The noble eightfold path is exceptionally striking in that it indicates how a complete transformation of personality could be effected by putting right view at the head as the forerunner.

Perhaps the most impressive among discourses in which the Buddha highlighted the pervasive significance of the noble eightfold path is the *Ākāśasutta*, "Sky *Sutta*", in the *Magga Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.¹⁹

"Just as, monks, various winds blow in the sky, easterly winds, westerly winds, northerly winds, southerly winds, dusty winds, dustless winds, cold winds and hot winds, gentle winds and strong winds; so too, when a monk develops and cultivates the noble eightfold path, for him the four foundations of mindfulness go to fulfilment by development, the four right efforts go to fulfilment by development, the four bases for success go to fulfilment by development, the five spiritual faculties go to fulfilment by development, the five powers go to fulfilment by development, the seven factors of enlightenment go to fulfilment by development."

All these go to fulfilment by development only when the noble eightfold path is developed in the way described above, namely based upon seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release, *vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggaparīṇāmiṃ*. That is to say, with *Nibbāna* as the goal of endeavour. Then none of the preceding categories go astray. They all contribute to the perfection and fulfilment of the noble eightfold path. They are all enshrined in it. So well knitted and pervasive is the noble eightfold path.

Another discourse of paramount importance, which illustrates the pervasive influence of the noble eightfold path, is the *MahāSaḷāyatanikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. There the Buddha shows us how all the other enlightenment factors are included in the noble eightfold path. In our discussion on *Nibbāna*, we happened to mention that the cessation of the six sense-spheres is *Nibbāna*. If *Nibbāna* is the cessation of the six sense-spheres, it should be possible to lay down a way of practice leading to *Nibbāna* through the six sense-spheres themselves. As a matter of fact, there is such a way of practice and this is what the *MahāSaḷāyatanikasutta* presents in summary form.

In this discourse, the Buddha first portrays how on the one hand the *samsāric* suffering arises depending on the six-fold sense-sphere. Then he explains how on the other hand the suffering could be ended by means of a practice pertaining to the six-fold sense-sphere itself.

Cakkhum, bhikkhave, ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, rūpe ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, cakkhusamphassaṃ ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, yampidaṃ cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā tampi ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, cakkhusmiṃ sārajjati, rūpesu sārajjati, cakkhuvīññāṇe sārajjati, cakkhusamphasse sārajjati, yampidaṃ cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā tasmimpi sārajjati.

Tassa sārattassa saṃyuttasa sammūlhassa assādānupassino viharato āyatim pañcupādānakkhandhā upacāyaṃ gacchanti. Taṇhā cassa ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratrābhinandinī sā cassa pavaḍḍhati. Tassa kāyikāpi darathā pavaḍḍhanti, cetasikāpi darathā pavaḍḍhanti, kāyikāpi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti, cetasikāpi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti, kāyikāpi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti, cetasikāpi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. So kāyadukkhampi cetodukkhampi paṭisaṃvedeti.²⁰

"Monks, not knowing and not seeing the eye as it actually is, not knowing and not seeing forms as they actually are, not knowing and not seeing eye-consciousness as it actually is, not knowing and not seeing eye-contact as it actually is, whatever is felt as pleasant or unpleasant or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, arising dependent on eye-contact, not knowing and not seeing that too as it actually is, one gets lustfully attached to the eye, to forms, to eye-consciousness, to eye-contact, and to whatever is felt as pleasant or unpleasant or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, arising in dependence on eye-contact.

And for him, who is lustfully attached, fettered, infatuated, contemplating gratification, the five aggregates of grasping get accumulated for the future and his craving, which makes for re-becoming, which is accompanied by delight and lust, delighting now here now there, also increases, his bodily stresses increase, his mental stresses increase, his bodily torments increase, his mental torments increase, his bodily fevers increase, his mental fevers increase, and he experiences bodily and mental suffering."

In this way, the Buddha first of all delineates how the entire *saṃsāric* suffering arises in connection with the six-fold sense-sphere. We will discuss the rest of the discourse in our next sermon.

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- ¹ M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
² S V 197, *Paṭhamavibhaṅgasutta*.
³ M II 173, *Caṅkīsutta*.
⁴ Ps III 426.
⁵ A IV 320, *Dutiyyamarāṇasatisutta*.
⁶ S V 227, *Sālasutta*; and S V 231, *Padasutta*.
⁷ S V 228, *Mallikasutta*.
⁸ S V 202, *Paṭipannasutta*.
⁹ S V 72, *Bhikkhusutta*.
¹⁰ S V 119, *Mettāsahagatasutta*.
¹¹ S V 331, *Paṭhama-Ānandasutta*.
¹² M III 72, *MahāCattārīsakasutta*.
¹³ E.g. S V 2, *Upaḍḍhasutta*.
¹⁴ M III 76, *MahāCattārīsakasutta*.
¹⁵ A I 32, *Ekaḍhammapāḷi*.
¹⁶ S V 421, *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*.
¹⁷ M III 203, *Cūḷakammavibhaṅgasutta*.
¹⁸ A II 34, *Aggappasādasutta*.
¹⁹ S V 49, *Ākāsasutta*.
²⁰ M III 287, *MahāSaḷāyatānikasutta*.

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

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sab-
būpadhiṭṭhissaggo taṇhakkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*¹

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

With the permission of the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the thirty-third sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

Towards the end of our last sermon, the other day, we happened to mention that in developing the noble eightfold path fully intent on *Nibbāna*, all the other enlightenment factors, namely the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right endeavours, the four bases for success, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers and the seven factors of enlightenment go to fulfilment by development.

Though we started analyzing the way in which the Buddha clarified the above-mentioned peculiarity of the noble eightfold path in the *MahāSaḷāyatanikasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, we could not finish it. From the *Sutta* passage we quoted the other day, we could see how the lack of knowledge of things as they are in regard to the six-fold sense-sphere gives rise to attachments, entanglements and delusions. As a result of it, the five aggregates of grasping get accumulated, leading to an increase in craving that makes for re-becoming, as well as an increase in bodily stresses and torment, mental stresses and torment, bodily fevers and mental fevers, and bodily and mental suffering.

Today, to begin with, let us discuss the rest of that discourse.

*Cakkhuñca kho, bhikkhave, jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, rūpe jānaṃ
passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ,
cakkhusamphassaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, yampidaṃ
cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā
adukkhamasukhaṃ vā tampi jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, cakkhusmiṃ na
sārajjati, rūpesu na sārajjati, cakkhuvīññāṇe na sārajjati,
cakkhusamphasse na sārajjati, yampidaṃ cakkhusamphassapaccayā*

uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā tasmimpi na sārājḅati.

Tassa asārattassa asaṃyuttassa asammūlhassa ādīnavānupassino viharato āyatiṃ pañcupādānakkhandhā apacayaṃ gacchanti. Taṇhā cassa ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratrābhinandinī sā cassa pahīyati. Tassa kāyikāpi darathā pahīyanti, cetasikāpi darathā pahīyanti, kāyikāpi santāpā pahīyanti, cetasikāpi santāpā pahīyanti, kāyikāpi pariḅhā pahīyanti, cetasikāpi pariḅhā pahīyanti. So kāyasukhampi cetosukhampi paḅisaṃvedeti.²

"Monks, knowing and seeing the eye as it actually is, knowing and seeing forms as they actually are, knowing and seeing eye-consciousness as it actually is, knowing and seeing eye-contact as it actually is, whatever is felt, pleasant or unpleasant or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, arising in dependence on eye-contact, knowing and seeing that too as it actually is, one does not get lustfully attached to the eye, to forms, to eye-consciousness, to eye-contact, and to whatever is felt as pleasant or unpleasant or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, arising in dependence on eye-contact.

And for him, who is not lustfully attached, not fettered, not infatuated, contemplating danger, the five aggregates of grasping get diminished for the future and his craving, which makes for re-becoming, which is accompanied by delight and lust, delighting now here now there, is abandoned, his bodily stresses are abandoned, his mental stresses are abandoned, his bodily torments are abandoned, his mental torments are abandoned, his bodily fevers are abandoned, his mental fevers are abandoned, and he experiences bodily and mental happiness."

Then the Buddha goes on to point out how the noble eightfold path gets developed in this noble disciple by this training in regard to the six spheres of sense.

Yā tathābhūtassa diḅḅhi sāssa hoti sammā diḅḅhi, yo tathābhūtassa saṅkappo svāssa hoti sammā saṅkappo, yo tathābhūtassa vāyāmo svāssa hoti sammā vāyāmo, yā tathābhūtassa sati sāssa hoti sammā sati, yo tathābhūtassa samādhi svāssa hoti sammā samādhi, Pubbeva kho panassa kāyakammaṃ vacīkammaṃ ājīvo suparisuddho hoti. Evamassāyaṃ ariyo aḅḅhaṅgiko maggo bhāvanāpāripiṛiṃ gacchati.

"The view of a person such as this is right view. The intention of a person such as this is right intention. The effort of a person such as this is right effort. The mindfulness of a person such as this is right mindfulness. The concentration of a person such as this is right concentration. But his bodily action, his verbal action and his livelihood have already been purified earlier. Thus this noble eightfold path comes to fulfilment in him by development."

It is noteworthy that in this context the usual order in citing the factors of the path is not found. But at the end we are told that bodily action, verbal action and livelihood have already been purified. This is reminiscent of the explanation given in the *MahāCattārisakasutta*, in the previous sermon. That is to say, when the noble eightfold path is perfected at the supramundane level, the three factors right speech, right action and right livelihood are represented by the very thought of abstaining.

Now the Buddha proclaims how all the enlightenment factors reach fulfilment by development when one develops the noble eightfold path in this way.

Tassa evaṃ imaṃ ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ bhāvayato cattāropi satipaṭṭhānā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti, cattāropi sammappadhānā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti, cattāropi iddhipādā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti, pañcapi indriyāni bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti, pañcapi balāni bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti, sattapi bojjhaṅgā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti. Tass'ime dve dhammā yuganaddhā vattanti, samatho ca vipassanā ca.

"When he develops this noble eightfold path in this way, the four foundations of mindfulness also come to fulfilment by development, the four right endeavours also come to fulfilment by development, the four bases for success also come to fulfilment by development, the five faculties also come to fulfilment by development, the five powers also come to fulfilment by development and the seven factors of enlightenment also come to fulfilment by development. These two things, namely serenity and insight, occur in him yoked evenly together."

The net result of perfecting all the enlightenment factors is summed up by the Buddha in the following declaration:

So ye dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā te dhamme abhiññā parijānāti, ye dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā te dhamme abhiññā pajahati, ye dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā te dhamme abhiññā bhāveti, ye dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā te dhamme abhiññā sacchikaroti.

"He comprehends by direct knowledge those things that should be comprehended by direct knowledge, he abandons by direct knowledge those things that should be abandoned by direct knowledge, he develops by direct knowledge those things that should be developed by direct knowledge, he realizes by direct knowledge those things that should be realized by direct knowledge."

The things that should be comprehended by direct knowledge are explained in the *Sutta* itself as the five aggregates of grasping. The things that should be abandoned by direct knowledge are ignorance and craving. The things that should be developed by direct knowledge are serenity and insight. The things that should be realized by direct knowledge are true knowledge and deliverance.

So then, as we have already mentioned, the orderly arrangement in these thirty-seven enlightenment factors is well illustrated in this discourse. It is because of this orderliness that even in a stream-winner, who is well established in the noble eightfold path, other enlightenment factors are said to be present as if automatically.

Simply because the phrase *ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo* occurs in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, some are tempted to interpret the four foundations of mindfulness as 'the only way'.³ We have pointed out, with valid reasons on an earlier occasion, that such a conclusion is unwarranted. *Ekāyano* does not mean "the only way", it means "directed to one particular destination", that is, to *Nibbāna*. That is why the words *nāyassa adhiḡamāya Nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*, "for the attainment of the supramundane path, for the realizing of *Nibbāna*", occur later on in the same sentence.

The four foundations of mindfulness are the preliminary training for the attainment of the supramundane path and realization of *Nibbāna*. The initial start made by the four foundations of mindfulness is carried over by the four right endeavours, the four bases for success, the five faculties, the five powers and the seven enlightenment factors, to reach the acme of perfection in the noble eightfold path.

In the *MahāSaḷāyatanikasutta* we came across the repetitive phrase *jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*, "knowing and seeing as it actually is", used in connection with the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, eye-contact and whatever is felt due to eye-contact. Let us examine what this knowing and seeing as it actually is amounts to.

Perception has been compared to a mirage.⁴ This mirage nature of perception has to be understood. A deer which sees a mirage in a plain from a distance in the dry season has a perception of water in it. In other words, it imagines water in the mirage. Impelled by that imagining, it runs towards the mirage with the idea that by running it can do away with the gap between itself and the water, and reach that water. But there is something that the deer is not aware of, and that is that this gap can never be reduced by running.

So long as there are two ends, there is a middle. This is a maxim worth emphasizing. Where there are two ends, there is a middle. If the eye is distinguished as one end and what appears in the distance is distinguished as water, there is an intervening space, a gap between the two. All these three factors are integral in this perceptual situation. That is why the gap can never be done away with.

The emancipated one, who has understood that this can never be eliminated, does not run after the mirage. That one with discernment, that *arahant*, stops short at the seen, true to the aphorism *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ*, "in the seen just the seen".⁵ He stops at the heard in the heard, he stops at the sensed in the sensed, he stops at the cognized in the cognized. He does not go on imagining like that deer, taking his stand on perception. He does not imagine a thing seen or one who sees. Nor does he entertain imaginings in regard to the heard, the sensed and the cognized.

The fact that this freedom from imaginings is there in an *arahant* is clear from the statement we quoted from the *Chabbisodhanasutta* on an earlier occasion. According to that discourse, a monk rightly claiming *arahant*-hood, one who declares himself to be an *arahant*, should be able to make the following statement in respect of the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized.

*Diṭṭhe kho ahaṃ, āvuso, anupāyo anapāyo anissito appaṭibaddho vip-pamutto visamṃyutto vimariyādikatena cetasā viharāmi.*⁶ "Friends, with

regard to the seen, I dwell unattracted, unrepelled, independent, uninvolved, released, unshackled, with a mind free from barriers."

Now let us try to understand this statement in the light of what we have already said about the mirage. One can neither approach nor retreat from a mirage. Generally, when one sees a mirage in the dry season, one imagines a perception of water in it and runs towards it due to thirst. But let us, for a moment, think that on seeing the mirage one becomes apprehensive of a flood and turns and runs away to escape it. Having run some far, if he looks back he will still see the mirage behind him.

So in the case of a mirage, the more one approaches it, the farther it recedes, the more one recedes from it, the nearer it appears. So in regard to the mirage of percepts, such as the seen and the heard, the *arahant* neither approaches nor recedes. Mentally he neither approaches nor recedes, though he may appear to do both physically, from the point of view of the worldling - *anupāyo anapāyo*, unattracted, unrepelled.

It is the same with regard to the term *anissito*, independent. He does not resort to the mirage with the thought 'Ah, here is a good reservoir'. *Appaṭibaddho*, uninvolved, he is not mentally involved in the mirage. *Vippamutto*, released, he is released from the perception of water in the mirage, from imagining water in it. *Visaṃyutto*, unshackled, he is not bound by it. *Vimariyādikatena cetasā*, with a mind free from barriers. What are these barriers? The two ends and the middle. The demarcation mentioned above by distinguishing eye as distinct from form, with the intervening space or the gap as the 'tertium quid'. So for the *arahant* there are no barriers by taking the eye, the forms and the gap as discrete.

Now from what we have already discussed, it should be clear that by *maññanā* or imagining a thing-hood is attributed to the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized. One imagines a thing in the seen, heard etc. By that very imagining as a thing it becomes another thing, true to the dictum expressed in the line of that verse from the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* we had quoted earlier, *yena yena hi maññanti, tato taṃ hoti aññāthā*,⁷ "in whatever [egoistic terms] they imagine, thereby it turns otherwise".

That is why we earlier said that a thing has to be there first for it to become another thing, for there to be an otherwiseness. The more one tries to approach the thing imagined, the more it recedes. In our analysis of the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*, we discussed at length about the three levels of knowledge mentioned there, namely *saññā*, *abhiññā* and *pariññā*.⁸

The untaught worldling is bound by sense-perception and goes on imagining according to it. Perceiving earth in the earth element, he imagines 'earth' as a thing, he imagines 'in the earth', 'earth is mine', 'from the earth' etc. So also with regard to the seen, *diṭṭha*.

But the disciple in training, *sekha*, since he has a higher knowledge of conditionality, although he has not exhausted the influxes and latencies, trains in resisting from the tendency to imagine. An emancipated one, the *arahant*, has fully comprehended the mirage nature of perception.

It seems, therefore, that these forms of *maññanā* enable one to imagine things, attributing a notion of substantiality to sense data. In fact, what we have here is only a heap of imaginings. There is also an attempt to hold on to things imagined. Craving lends a hand to it, and so there is grasping, *upādāna*. Thereby the fact that there are three conditions is ignored or forgotten.

In our analysis of the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* we came across a highly significant statement: *cakkhuñc'āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ*,⁹ "dependent on the eye and forms, friends, arises eye-consciousness". The deepest point in sense perception is already implicit there. This statement clearly indicates that eye-consciousness is dependently arisen. Thereby we are confronted with the question of the two ends and the middle, discussed above.

In fact, what is called eye-consciousness is the very discrimination between eye and form. At whatever moment the eye is distinguished as the internal sphere and form is distinguished as the external sphere, it is then that eye-consciousness arises. That itself is the gap in the middle, the intervening space. Here, then, we have the two ends and the middle.

To facilitate understanding this situation, let us hark back to the simile of the carpenter we brought up in an earlier sermon.¹⁰ We mentioned that a carpenter, fixing up a door by joining two planks, might speak of the

contact between the two planks when his attention is turned to the intervening space, to see how well one plank touches the other. The concept of touching between the two planks came up because the carpenter's attention picked up the two planks as separate and not as one board.

A similar phenomenon is implicit in the statement *cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇam*, "dependent on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness". In this perceptual situation, the eye is distinguished from forms. That discrimination itself is consciousness. That is the gap or the interstice, the middle. So here we have the two ends and the middle.

Eye-contact, from the point of view of *Dhamma*, is an extremely complex situation. As a matter of fact, it is something that has two ends and a middle. The two ends and the middle belong to it. However, there is a tendency in the world to ignore this middle. The attempt to tie up the two ends by ignoring the middle is *upādāna* or grasping. That is impelled by craving, *taṇhā*. Due to craving, grasping occurs as a matter of course. It is as if the deer, thinking 'I am here and the water is there, so let me get closer', starts running towards it. The gap is ignored.

A similar thing happens in the case of sense perception. What impels one to ignore that gap is craving. It is sometimes called *lepa* or glue. With that agglutinative quality in craving the gap is continually sought to be glued up and ignored.

The Buddha has compared craving to a seamstress. The verb *sibbati* or *samsibbati* is used to convey the idea of sewing and weaving both. In sewing as well as in weaving, there is an attempt to reduce a gap by stitching up or knitting up. What is called *upādāna*, grasping or holding on, is an attempt to tie up two ends with the help of *taṇhā*, craving or thirst.

In the *Tissametteyyasutta* of the *Pārāyaṇavagga* in the *Sutta Nipāta*, the Buddha shows how one can bypass this seamstress or weaver that is craving and attain emancipation in the following extremely deep verse.

*Yo ubh' anta-m-abhiññāya
majjhe mantā na lippati,
taṃ brūmi mahāpuriso 'ti
so 'dha sibbanim accagā.*¹¹

"He who, having known both ends,
With wisdom does not get attached to the middle,
Him I call a great man,
He has gone beyond the seamstress in this [world]."

This verse is so deep and meaningful that already during the lifetime of the Buddha, when he was dwelling at Isipatana in Benares, a group of Elder Monks gathered at the assembly hall and held a symposium on the meaning of this verse. In the Buddha's time, unlike today, for deep discussions on *Dhamma*, they took up such deep topics as found in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* and *Pārāyaṇavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In this case, the topic that came up for discussion, as recorded among the Sixes in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, is as follows:

Katamo nu kho, āvuso, eko anto, katamo dutiyo anto, kiṃ majjhe, kā sibbani? ¹²"What, friends, is the one end, what is the second end, what is in the middle and who is the seamstress?" The first venerable Thera, who addressed the assembly of monks on this topic, offered the following explanation:

"Contact, friends, is one end, arising of contact is the second end, cessation of contact is in the middle, craving is the seamstress, for it is craving that stitches up for the birth of this and that specific existence.

In so far, friends, does a monk understand by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, comprehend by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding. Understanding by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, comprehending by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, he becomes an ender of suffering in this very life." Craving, according to this interpretation, is a seamstress, because it is craving that puts the stitch for existence.

Then a second venerable Thera puts forth his opinion. According to his point of view, the past is one end, the future is the second end, the present is the middle, craving is the seamstress.

A third venerable Thera offered his interpretation. For him, one end is pleasant feeling, the second end is unpleasant or painful feeling, and the middle is neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling. Craving is again the seamstress.

A fourth venerable Thera opines that the one end is name, the second end is form, the middle is consciousness and the seamstress is craving.

A fifth venerable Thera puts forward the view that the one end is the six internal sense-spheres, the second end is the six external sense-spheres, consciousness is the middle and craving is the seamstress.

A sixth venerable Thera is of the opinion that the one end is *sakkāya*, a term for the five aggregates of grasping, literally the 'existing body'. The second end, according to him, is the arising of *sakkāya*. The middle is the cessation of *sakkāya*. As before, the seamstress is craving.

When six explanations had come up before the symposium, one monk suggested, somewhat like a point of order, that since six different interpretations have come up, it would be best to approach the teacher, the Fortunate One, and report the discussion for clarification and correct judgement.

Approving that suggestion, they all went to the Buddha and asked: *Kassa nu kho, bhante, subhāsitaṃ?* "Venerable sir, whose words are well spoken?" The Buddha replied: "Monks, what you all have said is well said from some point of view or other. But that for which I preached that verse in the *Metteyyapañha* is this", and quoting the verse in question the Buddha explains:

"Monks, contact is one end, the arising of contact is the second end, the cessation of contact is in the middle, craving is the seamstress, for it is craving that puts the stitch for the birth of this or that existence.

In so far, monks, does a monk understand by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, and comprehend by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding. Understanding by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, and comprehending by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, he becomes an ender of suffering in this very life."

The Buddha's explanation happens to coincide with the interpretation given by the first speaker at the symposium. However, since he ratifies all the six interpretations as well said, we can see how profound and at the same time broad the meaning of this cryptic verse is.

Let us now try to understand these six explanations. One can make use of these six as meditation topics. The verse has a pragmatic value and so also the explanations given. What is the business of this seamstress or weaver?

According to the first interpretation, craving stitches up the first end, contact, with the second end, the arising of contact, ignoring the middle, the cessation of contact. It is beneath this middle, the cessation of contact, that ignorance lurks. As the line *majjhe mantā na lippati*, "with wisdom does not get attached to the middle", implies, when what is in the middle is understood, there is emancipation. One is released from craving. So our special attention should be directed to what lies in the middle, the cessation of contact. Therefore, according to the first interpretation, the seamstress, craving, stitches up contact and the arising of contact, ignoring the cessation of contact.

According to the second interpretation, the past and the future are stitched up, ignoring the present. The third interpretation takes it as a stitching up of unpleasant feeling and pleasant feeling, ignoring the neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling. The fourth interpretation speaks of stitching up name and form, ignoring consciousness. For the fifth interpretation, it is a case of stitching up the six internal sense-spheres with the six external sense-spheres, ignoring consciousness. In the sixth interpretation, we are told of a stitching up of *sakkāya*, or 'existing-body', with the arising of the existing-body, ignoring the cessation of the existing-body.

We mentioned above that in sewing as well as in weaving there is an attempt to reduce a gap by stitching up or knitting up. These interpretations show us that ignoring the middle is a common trait in the worldling. It is there that ignorance lurks. If one rightly understands this middle dispassion sets in, leading to disenchantment, relinquishment and deliverance.

Let us now turn our attention to a few parallel discourses that throw some light on the depth of these meditation topics. We come across two verses in the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, which are relevant to the first interpretation, namely that which concerns contact, the arising of contact and the cessation of contact.

*Sukhaṃ vā yadi va dukkhaṃ,
adukkhamasukhaṃ sahā,
ajjhatañ ca bahiddhā ca
yaṃ kiñci atthi veditaṃ,
etaṃ 'dukkhaṃ'ti ñātvāna,
mosadhammaṃ palokinaṃ,
phussa phussa vayaṃ passaṃ
evaṃ tattha virajjati,
vedanānaṃ khayā bhikkhu,
nicchāto parinibbuto.¹³*

"Be it pleasant or unpleasant,
Or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant,
Inwardly or outwardly,
All what is felt,
Knowing it as 'pain',
Delusive and brittle,
Touch after touch, seeing how it wanes,
That way he grows dispassionate therein,
By the extinction of feeling it is
That a monk becomes hungerless and fully appeased."

The two lines *phussa phussa vayaṃ passaṃ* and *evaṃ tattha virajjati*, "touch after touch, seeing how it wanes, that way he grows dispassionate therein", are particularly significant as they are relevant to the knowledge of 'breaking up' in the development of insight. It seems, therefore, that generally the cessation of contact is ignored or slurred over by the worldling's mind, busy with the arising aspect. Therefore the seeing of cessation comes only with the insight knowledge of seeing the breaking up, *bhaṅgañāṇa*.

As an illustration in support of the second interpretation we may quote the following verses from the *Bhaddekarattasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*:

*Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya,
nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ
yad atītaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ
appattañ ca anāgataṃ.*

*Paccuppannañ ca yo dhammaṃ
tattha tattha vipassati,
asaṃhāraṃ asaṃkappaṃ
taṃ vidvā-m-anubrūhaye.*¹⁴

"Let one not trace back whatever is past,
Nor keep on hankering for the not yet come,
Whatever is past is gone for good,
That which is future is yet to come.
But [whoever] sees that which rises up,
As now with insight as and when it comes,
Neither 'drawing in' nor 'pushing on',
That kind of stage should the wise cultivate."

In the reflection on preparations, *saṅkhārā*, in deep insight meditation, it is the present preparations that are presented to reflection. That is why we find the apparently unusual order *atīta - anāgata - paccuppanna*, past - future - present, mentioned everywhere in the discourses. To reflect on past preparations is relatively easy, so also are the future preparations. It is the present preparations that are elusive and difficult to muster. But in deep insight meditation the attention should be on the present preparations. So much is enough for the second interpretation.

The third interpretation has to do with the three grades of feeling, the pleasant, unpleasant and the neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant. About these we have already discussed at length, on an earlier occasion, in connection with the long dialogue between the Venerable *arahant* nun Dhammadinnā and the lay disciple Visākha on the question of those three grades of feeling. Suffice it for the present to cite the following relevant sections of that dialogue.

*Sukhāya vedanāya dukkhā vedanā paṭibhāgo ... dukkhāya vedanāya sukhā vedanā paṭibhāgo ... adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjā paṭibhāgo ... avijjāya vijjā paṭibhāgo ... vijjāya vimutti paṭibhāgo ... vimuttiyā Nibbānaṃ paṭibhāgo.*¹⁵

"Unpleasant feeling is the counterpart of pleasant feeling ... pleasant feeling is the counterpart of unpleasant feeling ... ignorance is the counterpart of neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling ... knowledge is the counterpart of ignorance ... deliverance is the counterpart of knowledge ... *Nibbāna* is the counterpart of deliverance."

The counterpart or the ‘other half’ of pleasant feeling is unpleasant feeling. The counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling. Between these two there is a circularity in relationship, a seesawing. There is no way out.

But there is in the middle neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling. The counterpart of neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant feeling is ignorance. So we see how the neutrality and indifference of equanimity has beneath it ignorance. But luckily there is the good side in this pair of counterparts. Deliverance lies that way, for knowledge is the counterpart of ignorance. When ignorance is displaced, knowledge surfaces. From knowledge comes deliverance, and from deliverance *Nibbāna* or extinction. This much is enough for the third interpretation.

Now for the fourth interpretation. Here we have consciousness between name-and-form. Let us remind ourselves of the two verses quoted in an earlier sermon from the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*.

*Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā
ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino,
nirodhaṃ appajānantā
āgantāro punabbhavaṃ.*

*Ye ca rūpe pariññāya,
arūpesu asaṅghitā,
nirodhe ye vimuccanti,
te janā maccuhāyino.*¹⁶

"Those beings that go to realms of form,
And those who are settled in formless realms,
Not understanding the fact of cessation,
Come back again and again to existence.
Those who, having comprehended realms of form,
Do not settle in formless realms,
Are released in the experience of cessation,
It is they that are the dispellers of death."

The cessation here referred to is the cessation of consciousness, or the cessation of becoming. Such emancipated ones are called "dispellers of death", *maccuhāyino*. We have mentioned earlier that, before the advent of the Buddha and even afterwards, sages like Ālāra Kālāma tried to escape form, *rūpa*, by grasping the formless, *arūpa*. But only the Buddha

could point out that one cannot win release from form by resorting to the formless. Release from both should be the aim. How could that come about? By the cessation of consciousness which discriminates between form and formless. It is tantamount to the cessation of existence, *bhavanirodha*.

As a little hint to understand this deep point, we may allude to that simile of the dog on the plank across the stream which we brought up several times. Why does that dog keep on looking at the dog it sees in the water, its own reflection? Because it is unaware of the reflexive quality of the water. Consciousness is like that water which has the quality of reflecting on its surface. What is there between the seen dog and the looking dog as the middle is consciousness itself. One can therefore understand why consciousness is said to be in the middle between name and form.

Generally, in the traditional analysis of the relation between name-and-form and consciousness, this fact is overlooked. True to the simile of the magical illusion, given to consciousness, its middle position between name and form is difficult for one to understand. Had the dog understood the reflective quality of water, it would not halt on that plank to gaze down and growl.

The fifth interpretation puts the six internal sense-spheres and the six external sense-spheres on either side, to have consciousness in the middle. A brief explanation would suffice.

Dvayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭicca viññānaṃ sambhoti,¹⁷ "monks, dependent on a dyad consciousness arises", says the Buddha. That is to say, dependent on internal and external sense-spheres consciousness arises. As we have already pointed out, consciousness is the very discrimination between the two. Therefore consciousness is the middle. So at the moment when one understands consciousness, one realizes that the fault lies in this discrimination itself. The farther limit of the internal is the nearer limit of the external. One understands then that the gap, the interstice between them, is something imagined.

Then as to the sixth interpretation, we have the *sakkāya*, the "existing body", and *sakkāyasamudaya*, the arising of the existing body, as the two ends. Because the term *sakkāya* is not often met with, it might be difficult to understand what it means. To be brief, the Buddha has defined the term

as referring to the five aggregates of grasping.¹⁸ Its derivation, *sat kāya*, indicates that the term is suggestive of the tendency to take the whole group as existing, giving way to the perception of the compact, *ghanasaññā*.

The arising of this notion of an existing body is *chandarāga* or desire and lust. It is due to desire or craving that one grasps a heap as a compact whole. The cessation of the existing body is the abandonment of desire and lust. This, then, is a summary of the salient points in these six interpretations as meditation topics for realization.

Let us now turn our attention to the sewing and weaving spoken of here. We have mentioned above that both in sewing and weaving a knotting comes in, as a way of reducing the gap. This knotting involves some kind of attracting, binding and entangling. In the case of a sewing machine, every time the needle goes down, the shuttle hastens to put a knot for the stitch. So long as this attraction continues, the stitching goes on.

There is some relation between sewing and weaving. Sewing is an attempt to put together two folds. In weaving a single thread of cotton or wool is looped into two folds. In both there is a formation of knots. As already mentioned, knots are formed by some sort of attraction, binding and entangling.

Now craving is the seamstress who puts the stitches to this existence, *bhava*. She has a long line of qualifications for it. *Ponobhaviḱā nandirāgasahagatā tatrātrābhinandinī* are some of the epithets for craving. She is the perpetrator in re-becoming or renewed existence, *ponobhaviḱā*, bringing about birth after birth. She has a trait of delighting and lusting, *nandirāgasahagatā*. Notoriously licentious she delights now here now there, *tatrātrābhinandinī*. Like that seamstress, craving puts the stitches into existence, even as the needle and the shuttle. Craving draws in with *upādāna*, grasping, while conceit binds and views complete the entanglement. That is how existence gets stitched up.

At whatever moment the shuttle runs out of its load of cotton, the apparent stitches do not result in a seam. Similarly, in a weaving, if instead of drawing in the thread to complete the knot it is drawn out, all what is woven will be undone immediately. This is the difference between

existence and its cessation. Existence is a formation of knots and stress. Cessation is an unravelling of knots and rest.

Existence is a formation of knots and stress. Cessation is an unravelling of knots and rest.

The following verse in the *Suddhaṭṭhakasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* seems to put in a nutshell the philosophy behind the simile of the seamstress.

*Na kappayanti na purekkharonti
'accantasuddhī' ti na te vadanti,
ādānaganthaṃ gathitaṃ visajja,
āsaṃ na kubbanti kuhiñci loke.*¹⁹

"They fabricate not, they proffer not,
Nor do they speak of a 'highest purity',
Unravelling the tangled knot of grasping,
They form no desire anywhere in the world."

The comments we have presented here, based on the verse beginning with *yo ubh' anta-m-abhiññāya* could even be offered as a synopsis of the entire series of thirty-three sermons. All what we brought up in these sermons concerns the question of the two ends and the middle. The episode of the two ends and the middle enshrines a profound insight into the law of dependent arising and the Buddha's teachings on the middle path. That is why we said that the verse in question is both profound and broad, as far as its meaning is concerned.

So now that we have presented this synoptic verse, we propose to wind up this series of sermons. As a matter of fact, the reason for many a misconception about *Nibbāna* is a lack of understanding the law of dependent arising and the middle path. For the same reason, true to the Buddha's description of beings as taking delight in existence, *bhavarāmā*, lusting for existence, *bhavaratā*, and rejoicing in existence, *bhavasammuditā*,²⁰ *Nibbāna* came to be apprehensively misconstrued as tantamount to annihilation. Therefore even commentators were scared of the prospect of a cessation of existence and tried to explain away *Nibbāna* through definitions that serve to perpetuate craving for existence.

If by this attempt of ours to clear the path to *Nibbāna*, overgrown as it is through neglect for many centuries, due to various social upheavals, any store of merit accrued to us, may it duly go to our most venerable Great

Preceptor, who so magnanimously made the invitation to deliver this series of sermons. As he is staying away for medical treatment at this moment, aged and ailing, let us wish him quick recovery and long life. May all his *Dhamma* aspirations be fulfilled!

May the devoted efforts in meditation of all those fellow dwellers in this holy life, who listened to these sermons and taped them for the benefit of those who would like to lend ear to them, be rewarded with success! Let a myriad *arahant* lotuses, unsmearred by water and mud, bright petalled and sweet scented, bloom all over the forest hermitage pond. May the merits accrued by giving these sermons be shared by my departed parents, who brought me up, my teachers, who gave me vision, and my friends, relatives and lay supporters, who helped keep this frail body alive. May they all attain the bliss of *Nibbāna*!

May all gods and Brahmās and all beings rejoice in the merits accrued by these sermons! May it conduce to the attainment of that peaceful and excellent *Nibbāna*! May the dispensation of the Fully Enlightened One endure long in this world! Let this garland of well preached *Dhamma* words be a humble offering at the foot of the *Dhamma* shrine, which received honour and worship even from the Buddha himself.

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- ¹ M I 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
² M III 288, *MahāSaḷāyatanikasutta*.
³ M I 55, *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*.
⁴ S III 142, *Phenapiṇḍūpamasutta*.
⁵ Ud 8, *Bāhiyasutta*.
⁶ M III 30, *Chabbisodhanasutta*; see sermon 15.
⁷ Sn 757, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*; see sermon 13.
⁸ M I 1, *Mūlapariyāyasutta*; see sermon 12.
⁹ M I 111, *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*; see sermon 11.
¹⁰ See sermon 10.
¹¹ Sn 1042, *Tissametteyyamāṇavapucchā*.
¹² A III 399, *Majjhesutta*.
¹³ Sn 738-739, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*.
¹⁴ M III 187, *Bhaddekarattasutta*.
¹⁵ M I 304, *CūlaVedallasutta*.
¹⁶ Sn 754-755, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*, see sermon 15.
¹⁷ S IV 67, *Dutiyadvayasutta*.
¹⁸ S III 159, *Sakkāyasutta*.
¹⁹ Sn 794, *Suddhaṭṭhakasutta*.
²⁰ It 43, *Diṭṭhigatasutta*.