



Nibbāna - The Mind Stilled

Volume - V

Bhikkhu K. Nāṇananda

Nibbāna -

The Mind Stilled

Volume V

(The *Nibbāna* Sermons 21 - 25)

by venerable K. Ñāṇananda Bhikkhu

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**Dedicated to
my Upajjhāya
the late venerable
Mātara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera
of Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya
Sri Lanka**

‘The Gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts’

We acknowledge with gratitude the generous support received from readers and well wishers which enabled us to bring out this volume as a gift-of-Dhamma for free distribution. We are also thankful to Mr. C. Jayasoma and his staff of the Quality Printers for their share in preserving the quality of the gift. May the merit accrued by this ‘Dhamma dāna’ redound to their well being here & here after! May it conduce to their attainment of the Bliss Supreme - Nibbāna!

- The Settlor

D.G.M.B.

January 2007 (B.E. 2550)

Index

	page
Abbreviations	VI
About the author...	VII
About the D.G.M.B....	VIII
Introduction	IX
<i>Nibbāna</i> Sermon 21	443
Notes	462
<i>Nibbāna</i> Sermon 22	463
Notes	484
<i>Nibbāna</i> Sermon 23	485
Notes	507
<i>Nibbāna</i> Sermon 24	508
Notes	526
<i>Nibbāna</i> Sermon 25	527
Notes	548

Abbreviations:

A	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
It	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
It-a	<i>Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Ud-a	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i> (comy on Ud)
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Th-a	<i>Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada aṭṭhakathā</i>
Pj I	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i> (comy on Khp)
Pj II	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i> (comy on Sn)
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i> (comy on M)
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i> (comy on A)
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
S	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i> (comy on S)
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i> (comy on D)

(Unless otherwise specified, references are given according to volume and page number of the PTS edition, and in the case of Dhp, Sn, Th and Thī according to the verse number of the PTS edition)

About the author. . . .

The venerable author of this compendium of sermons on Nibbāna was born in 1940. He graduated from the University of Peradeniya in 1962 and served as an Assistant Lecturer in Pali at the same University for a brief period. Impelled by a deep understanding of the teachings of the Buddha, he renounced his post in 1967 to enter the Order of Buddhist monks under the name Katukurunde Ñāṇananda in the forest monastic tradition of Sri Lanka.

The 33 sermons on Nibbāna presented in these 7 volumes were originally delivered by the venerable author to his fellow monks at the behest of his revered preceptor, the late venerable Mātara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, the chief incumbent of Meetirigala Hermitage (Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya) and an illustrious exponent of Insight Meditation in Sri Lanka. The meeting of these two eminent disciples of the Buddha in a teacher - pupil relationship for nearly two decades, led to an outstanding seminal contribution to the understanding of Dhamma in its correct perspective.

The reader of these volumes will no doubt find unmistakable evidence of the author's exposure to the methods of critical examination in the understanding of exegetical treatises during his university days. The mode of presentation, however, reveals a penetrative understanding of the deeper aspects of the Buddha's teaching blossoming into a harmonious blend of academic erudition with practical application of that intensive learning process afforded by the contemplative life of a forest monk. Readers familiar with the author's *Concept and Reality*, *Ideal Solitude* and *The Magic of the Mind* will find that the present set of sermons draws upon some of the doctrinal points outlined in those books for deeper analysis. Indeed these sermons exhibit a salutary orientation towards the practical aspects of the Buddha's teachings - a tendency already evident in the author's '*Towards Calm and Insight*' and '*Seeing Through*.'

The venerable author has also effected a significant change in the methods adopted to reach the seekers of Dhamma in specifying that all publications should be distributed free as 'gifts of Dhamma'. '*Towards Calm and Insight*' was the first step in this direction and all publications, which followed upheld this time - honored Buddhist ideal of 'Dhamma - dana'. In order to support this laudable venture, a Buddhist Publication Trust was established under the aegis of the Public Trustee to enable the Buddhist laity and the well - wishers to participate in this worthy cause by way of contributions. This Trust, officially known as 'Dharma Grantha Mudrana Bhāraya' (D.G.M.B.) successfully launched the publication of the original Sinhala series entitled '*Nivane Niveema*' comprising 11 volumes of 3 sermons each.

Sermons delivered to the local community in the present abode of the venerable author at 'Pahan Kanuwa' in Devalegama (Kegalla District) are also being published by the D.G.M.B. as a separate series, while devotees inspired by these sermons are simultaneously sponsoring the publication of selected single sermons as separate booklets for free distribution. The present series bringing out the English version of 'Nivane Niveema' is being made available also through the Internet under the website <<http://www.beyondthenet-net>> in keeping with the aspirations of the venerable author to bestow this 'gift - of - Dhamma - that - excels - all - other - gifts' - on a global audience.

* * * * *

About the D.G.M.B.

Rare is the birth of a Buddha in this world. So rare too, is the opportunity to listen to his Dhamma. This conviction has inspired many a devoted Buddhist to cherish the Dhamma as something extremely precious.

The Buddha has declared that salutary friendship (Kalyāna-mittatā) is almost synonymous with his dispensation. The gift-of-Dhamma is the link that moulds the bond of this friendship. Dhamma deserves no price-tag precisely because it is price-less.

It is in this spirit that the D.G.M.B. launched its Dhamma-dāna movement in 1997. Many a parched traveller on the desert path has had a refreshing drink of the nectar of Dhamma free of charge ever since. Many an enthusiastic benevolent heart seized the opportunity to participate in a genuine act of Dhammadāna.

Should we always go for things that sport a price-tag? Is everything that comes free to us, necessarily worthless? What about the air and the sunshine?

It is in point of merit that the gift-of-Dhamma excels all other gifts. Dhamma is the nectar that quenches the insatiate samsāric thirst of beings. The gift of Dhamma is therefore of far greater merit than an ordinary gift of food or drink. For the magnanimous-Dhammadāna is for ever an unfailing source of altruistic joy.

All enquiries regarding participation in this Dhammadāna should be addressed to:-

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Colombo - 05.
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Introduction

'Nibbāna' - the ultimate goal of the Buddhist, has been variously understood and interpreted in the history of Buddhist thought. One who earnestly takes up the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path for the attainment of this goal, might sometimes be dismayed to find this medley of views confronting him. Right View, as the first factor of that path, has always to be in the vanguard in one's practice. In the interests of this Right View, which one has to progressively 'straighten-up', a need for clarification before purification might sometimes be strongly felt. It was in such a context that the present series of 33 sermons on *Nibbāna* came to be delivered.

The invitation for this series of sermons came from my revered teacher, the late Venerable Matara Sri Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, who was the resident meditation teacher of Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya Meditation Centre. Under his inspiring patronage these sermons were delivered once every fortnight before the group of resident monks of Nissarana Vanaya, during the period 12.08.1988 - 30.01.1991. The sermons, which were originally circulated on cassettes, began issuing in book-form only in 1997, when the first volume of the Sinhala series titled 'Nivane Niveema' came out, published by the 'Dharma Grantha Mudrana Bhāraya' (Dhamma Publications Trust) set up for the purpose in the Department of the Public Trustee, Sri Lanka. The series is scheduled to comprise 11 volumes, of which so far 9 have come out. The entire series is for free distribution as 'Dhamma dāna' - 'the gift of truth that excels all other gifts'. The sister series to come out in English will comprise 7 volumes of 5 sermons each, which will likewise be strictly for free distribution since Dhamma is price-less.

In these sermons I have attempted to trace the original meaning and significance of the Pali term *Nibbāna* (Skt. *Nirvāna*) based on the evidence from the discourses of the Pali Canon. This led to a detailed analysis and a re-appraisal of some of the most controversial suttas on Nibbāna often quoted by scholars in support of their interpretations. The findings, however, were not presented as a dry scholastic exposition of mere academic interest. Since the sermons were addressed to a meditative audience keen on realizing Nibbāna, edifying similes, metaphors and illustrations had their place in the discussion. The gamut of 33 sermons afforded sufficient scope for dealing with almost all the salient teachings in Buddhism from a practical point of view.

The present translation, in so far as it is faithful to the original, will reflect the same pragmatic outlook. While the findings could be of interest even to the scholar bent on theorizing on *Nibbāna*, it is hoped that the mode of presentation will have a special appeal for those who are keen on realizing it.

I would like to follow up these few prefatory remarks with due acknowledgements to all those who gave their help and encouragement for bringing out this translation:-

To venerable Anālayo for transcribing the tape recorded translations and the meticulous care and patience with which he has provided references to the P.T.S. editions.

To Mr. U. Mapa, presently the Ambassador for Sri Lanka in Myanmar, for his yeoman service in taking the necessary steps to establish the Dhamma Publications Trust in his former capacity as the Public Trustee of Sri Lanka.

To Mr. G.T.Bandara, Director, Royal Institute, 191, Havelock Road, Colombo 5., for taking the lead in this Dhammadana movement with his initial donation and for his devoted services as the 'Settler' of the Trust.

To Mrs. Yukie Sirimane for making available this translation as well as our other publications to the world through the Internet under a special web-site-<<http://www.beyondthenet.net>

And last but not least-

To. Mr. Hideo Chihashi, Director , Green Hill Meditation Institute, Tokyo, Japan, and to his group of relatives, friends and pupils for their munificence in sponsoring the publication of the first volume of 'Nibbāna - The mind stilled'.

'Nibbānam paramam sukham'
'Nibbana is the supreme bliss'

-Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

Pothgulgala Aranyaya
'Pahankanuwa'
Kandededara
Devalegama
Sri Lanka
August 2002 (B.E. 2546)

Nibbāna - The Mind Stilled
Volume V

Sermon - 21

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

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

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the twenty-first sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

The other day we discussed, to some extent, the ten questions known as the "ten indeterminate points", *dasa avyākata vatthūni*, which the Buddha laid aside, refusing to give a categorical answer as "yes" or "no". We pointed out, that the reason why he refused to answer them was the fact that they were founded on some wrong views, some wrong assumptions. To give categorical answers to such questions would amount to an assertion of those views. So he refrained from giving clear-cut answers to any of those questions.

Already from our last sermon, it should be clear, to some extent, how the eternalist and annihilationist views peep through them. The tetralemma on the after-death state of the *Tathāgata*, which is directly relevant to our theme, also presupposes the validity of those two extreme views. Had the Buddha given a categorical answer, he too would be committing himself to the presumptions underlying them.

The middle path he promulgated to the world is one that transcended both those extremes. It is not a piecemeal compromise between them. He could have presented a half-way solution by taking up one or the other of the last two standpoints, namely "the *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death", or "the *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death". But instead of stooping to that position, he rejected the questionnaire in toto.

On the other hand, he brought in a completely new mode of analysis, illustrative of the law of dependent arising underlying the doctrine of the four noble truths, in order to expose the fallacy of those questions.

The other day we happened to mention the conclusive answer given by the Buddha to the question raised by the wandering ascetic *Vacchagotta* in the *Aggivacchagottasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, concerning the after death state of the *Tathāgata*. But we had no time to discuss it at length. Therefore let us take it up again.

When the wandering ascetic *Vacchagotta* had granted the incongruity of any statement to the effect that the extinguished fire has gone in such and such a direction, and the fact that the term *Nibbāna* is only a reckoning or a turn of speech, the Buddha follows it up with the conclusion:

*Evameva kho, Vaccha, yena rūpena tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya, taṃ rūpaṃ tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ ucchinnamūlaṃ tālāvat-thukataṃ anabhāvakataṃ āyatiṃ anuppādadhammaṃ. Rūpasaṅkhāvimutto kho, Vaccha, tathāgato, gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho, seyyathāpi mahāsamuddo. Uppajjati'ti na upeti, na uppajjati'ti na upeti, uppajjati ca na ca uppajjati'ti na upeti, neva uppajjati na na uppajjati'ti na upeti.*²

"Even so, *Vaccha*, that form by which one designating the *Tathāgata* might designate him, that has been abandoned by him, cut off at the root, made like an uprooted palm tree, made non-existent and incapable of arising again. The *Tathāgata* is free from reckoning in terms of form, *Vaccha*, he is deep, immeasurable and hard to fathom, like the great ocean. To say that he is reborn falls short of a reply, to say that he is not reborn falls short of a reply, to say that he is both reborn and is not reborn falls short of a reply, to say that he is neither reborn nor is not reborn falls short of a reply."

As in the case of the aggregate of form, so also with regard to the aggregates of feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness, that is to say, in regard to all the five aggregates of grasping, the Buddha made this particular declaration. From this it is clear, that in this dispensation the *Tathāgata* cannot be reckoned in terms of any one of the five aggregates.

The similes reveal to us the state of the *Tathāgata* - the simile of the uprooted tree, for instance. On seeing a palm tree uprooted, but somehow left standing, one would mistake it for a growing palm tree. The worldling has a similar notion of the *Tathāgata*. This simile of the tree reminds us of the *Isidattatheragāthā*, which has an allusion to it.

*Pañcakkhandhā pariññātā,
tiṭṭhanti chinnamūlakā,
dukkhakkhayo anuppatto,
patto me āsavakkhayo.*³

"Five aggregates, now fully understood,
Just stand, cut off at their root,
Reached is suffering's end,
Extinct for me are influxes."

On reaching *arahant*-hood, one finds oneself in this strange situation. The occurrence of the word *saṅkhā* in this connection is particularly significant. This word came up in our discussion of the term *papañca* in the contexts *papañcasāṅkhā* and *papañcasaññāsāṅkhā*⁴. There we had much to say about the word. It is synonymous with *samaññā*, "appellation", and *paññatti*, "designation". Reckoning, appellation and designation are synonymous to a great extent. So the concluding statement of the Buddha, already quoted, makes it clear that the *Tathāgata* cannot be reckoned or designated in terms of form, though he has form, he cannot be reckoned by feeling, though he experiences feeling, nor can he be reckoned by, or identified with, the aggregates of perceptions, preparations or consciousness.

Now in order to make a reckoning, or a designation, there has to be a duality, a dichotomy. We had occasion to touch upon this normative tendency to dichotomize. By way of illustration we may refer to the fact that even the price of an article can be reckoned, so long as there is a vortex between supply and demand. There has to be some kind of vortex between two things, for there to be a designation. A vortex, or *vaṭṭa*, is an alternation between two things, a cyclic interrelation. A designation can come in only so long as there is such a cyclic process. Now the *Tathāgata* is free from this duality.

We have pointed out that the dichotomy between consciousness and name-and-form is the *samsāric* vortex. Let us refresh our memory of this vortex by alluding to a quotation from the *Udāna* which we brought up on an earlier occasion.

*Chinnaṃ vaṭṭaṃ na vattati,
es' ev' anto dukkhassa.*⁵

The whirlpool cut off whirls no more.

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

This, in fact, is a reference to the *arahant*. The vortex is between consciousness and name-and-form. By letting go of name-and-form, and realizing the state of a non-manifestative consciousness, the *arahant* has, in this very life, realized the cessation of existence, which amounts to a cessation of suffering as well. Though he continues to live on, he does not grasp any of those aggregates tenaciously. His consciousness does not get attached to name-and-form. That is why it is said that the vortex turns no more.

To highlight this figure of the vortex, we can bring up another significant quotation from the *Upādānaparivaṭṭasutta* and the *Sattaṭṭhānasutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*.

*Ye suvimuttā te kevalino, ye kevalino vaṭṭaṃ tesam n'atthi paññāpanāya.*⁶ "Those who are fully released, are truly alone, and for them who are truly alone, there is no whirling round for purposes of designation".

This statement might sound rather queer. The term *kevalī* occurs not only in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, but in the *Sutta Nipāta* as well, with reference to the *arahant*. The commentary to the *Sutta Nipāta*, *Paramatthajotikā*, gives the following definition to the term when it comes up in the *Kasibhāradvāja Sutta: sabbaguṇaparipuṇṇaṃ sabba-yogavisamṃyuttaṃ vā*.⁷ According to the commentator, this term is used for the *arahant* in the sense that he is perfect in all virtues, or else that he is released from all bonds.

But going by the implications of the word *vaṭṭa*, associated with it, we may say that the term has a deeper meaning. From the point of view of etymology, the word *kevalī* is suggestive of singularity, full integration, aloofness and solitude. We spoke of a letting go of name-and-form. The non-manifestative consciousness, released from name-and-form, is indeed symbolic of the *arahant's* singularity, wholeness, aloofness and solitude.

In the following verse from the *Dhammapada*, which we had quoted earlier too, this release from name-and-form is well depicted.

*Kodhaṃ jahe vippajaheyya mānaṃ,
saṃyojanaṃ sabbam atikkameyya,
taṃ nāmarūpasmim asajjamānaṃ,
akiñcanaṃ nānupatanti dukkhā*⁸.

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

We came across another significant reference to the same effect in the *Māghasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*.

*Ye ve asattā vicaranti loke,
akiñcanā kevalino yatattā,
kālena tesu havyaṃ pavecche,
yo brāhmaṇo puññapekho yajetha*⁹.

"They who wander unattached in the world,
Owning naught, aloof, restrained,
To them in time, let the brahmin offer,
That oblation, if merit be his aim."

This verse also makes it clear, that a freedom from ownings and attachments is implicit in the term *kevalī*. It has connotations of full integration and aloofness. The term *kevala*, therefore, is suggestive of the state of release from that vortex.

If, for instance, a vortex in the ocean comes to cease, can one ask where the vortex has gone? It will be like asking where the extinguished fire has gone. One might say that the vortex has 'joined' the ocean. But that, too, would not be a proper statement to make. From the very outset what in fact was there was the great ocean, so one cannot say that the vortex has gone somewhere, nor can one say that it is not gone. It is also incorrect to say that it has joined the ocean. A cessation of a vortex gives rise to such a problematic situation. So is this state called *kevalī*. What, in short, does it amount to? **The vortex has now become the great ocean itself. That is the significance of the comparison of the emancipated one to the great ocean.**

The commentators do not seem to have paid sufficient attention to the implications of this simile. But when one thinks of the relation between the vortex and the ocean, it is as if the *arahant* has become one with the ocean. But this is only a turn of speech.

In reality, the vortex is merely a certain pervert state of the ocean itself. That perversion is now no more. It has ceased. It is because of that perversion that there was a manifestation of suffering. **The cessation of suffering could therefore be compared to the cessation of the vortex, leaving only the great ocean as it is.**

Only so long as there is a whirling vortex can we point out a ‘here’ and a ‘there’. In the vast ocean, boundless as it is, where there is a vortex, or an eddy, we can point it out with a ‘here’ or a ‘there’. Even so, in the case of the *saṃsāric* individual, as long as the whirling round is going on in the form of the vortex, there is a possibility of designation or appellation as ‘so-and-so’. But once the vortex has ceased, there is actually nothing to identify with, for purposes of designation. The most one can say about it, is to refer to it as the place where a vortex has ceased.

Such is the case with the *Tathāgata* too. Freedom from the duality is for him release from the vortex itself. We have explained on a previous occasion how a vortex comes to be¹⁰. A current of water, trying to go against the mainstream, when its attempt is foiled, in clashing with the mainstream, gets thrown off and pushed back, but turns round to go whirling and whirling as a whirlpool. This is not the norm. This is something abnormal. Here is a perversion resulting from an attempt to do the impossible. This is how a thing called ‘a vortex’ comes to be.

The condition of the *saṃsāric* being is somewhat similar. What we are taught as the four ‘perversions’ in the *Dhamma*, describe these four pervert attitudes of a *saṃsāric* being.

1. Perceiving permanence in the impermanent
2. Perceiving pleasure in the painful
3. Perceiving beauty in the foul
4. Perceiving a self in the not-self.

The *saṃsāric* individual tries to forge ahead in existence, misled by these four pervert views. The result of that attempt is the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form, a recurrent process of whirling round and round.

Because of this process of whirling round, as in a vortex, there is an unreality about this world. What for us appears as the true and real state of the world, the Buddha declares to be false and unreal. We have already quoted on an earlier occasion the verse from the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, which clearly illustrates this point.

*Anattani attamāṇiṃ,
passa lokam sadevakam,
niviṭṭham nāmarūpasmim,
idaṃ saccaṃ 'ti maññati'*¹¹.

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

What the world entrenched in name-and-form takes to be real, it seems is unreal, according to this verse. This idea is reinforced by the following refrain-like phrase in the *Uragasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*: *Sabbaṃ vitatham idan'ti ñatvā loke*,¹² "knowing that everything in this world is not 'such'".

We have referred to the special significance of the *Uragasutta* on several occasions.¹³ That discourse enjoins a giving up of everything, like the sloughing off of a worn-out skin by a serpent. Now a serpent sheds its worn-out skin by understanding that it is no longer the real skin. Similarly, one has to understand that everything in the world is not 'such'. *Tathā* is "such". Whatever is 'as-it-is', is *yathābhūta*. To be 'as-it-is', is to be 'such'. What is not 'as-it-is', is *ayathā* or *vitatha*, "unsuch" or "not such", that is to say, unreal.

It seems, therefore, that the vortex whirling between consciousness and name-and-form, in the case of *saṃsāric* beings, is something not 'such'. It is not the true state of affairs in the world. To be free from this aberration, this unreal state of duality, is to be an *arahant*.

The three unskilful mental states of greed, hate and delusion are the outcome of this duality itself. So long as the whirling goes on, there is friction manifesting itself, sometimes as greed and sometimes as hate. Delusion impels and propels both. It is just one current of water that goes whirling round and round, bringing about friction and conflict. This

interplay between consciousness and name-and-form is actually a pervert state, abnormal and unreal. To be a *Tathāgata* is a return to reality and suchness, from this unreal, unsuch, pervert state.

We happened to mention earlier that the term *Tathāgata* was already current among ascetics of other sects. But it is not in the same sense that the Buddha used this term. For those of other sects, the term *Tathāgata* carried with it the prejudice of a soul or a self, even if it purported to represent the ideal of emancipation.

But in this dispensation, the *Tathāgata* is defined differently. *Tathā*, "even so", "thus", is the correlative of *yathā*, "just as", "in whatever way". **At whatever moment it becomes possible to say that ‘as is the ocean, so is the vortex now’, then, it is the state of *tathāgata*.**

The vortex originated by deviating from the course of the main stream of the ocean. But if an individual, literally so-called, gave up such pervert attitudes, as seeing permanence in what is impermanent, if he got rid of the four perversions by the knowledge and insight into things as-they-are, then he comes to be known as a *Tathāgata*.

He is a "thus gone", in the sense that, as is the norm of the world, 'thus' he is now. There is also an alternative explanation possible, etymologically. *Tathatā* is a term for the law of dependent arising.¹⁴ It means "thusness" or "suchness". This particular term, so integral to the understanding of the significance of *paṭicca samuppāda*, or "dependent arising", is almost relegated to the limbo in our tradition.

Tathāgata could therefore be alternatively explained as a return to that 'thusness' or 'suchness', by comprehending it fully. In this sense, the derivation of the term could be explained analytically as *tatha* + *āgata*. Commentators, too, sometimes go for this etymology, though not exactly in this sense¹⁵.

According to this idea of a return to the true state of suchness, we may say that **there is neither an increase nor a decrease in the ocean, when a vortex ceases**. Why? Because what was found both inside the vortex and outside of it was simply water. So is the case with the *saṃsāric* individual.

What we have to say from here onwards, regarding this *saṃsāric* individual, is directly relevant to meditation. As we mentioned on an earlier occasion, the four elements, earth, water, fire and air, are to be found both internally and externally. In the *MahāHatthipadopama Sutta*

of the *Majjhima Nikāya* we come across a way of reflection that leads to insight in the following instruction.

Yā c' eva kho pana ajjhattikā paṭhavindhātu, yā ca bāhirā paṭhavindhātu, paṭhavindhātur ev' esā. Taṃ n' etaṃ mama, n' eso 'haṃ asmi, na meso attā 'ti evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbam¹⁶.

"Now whatever earth element that is internal, and whatever earth element that is external, both are simply earth element. That should be seen as it is with right wisdom thus: 'this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'"

The implication is that this so-called individual, or person, is in fact a vortex, formed out of the same kind of primary elements that obtain outside of it. So then, the whole idea of an individual or a person is a mere perversion. The notion of individuality in *saṃsāric* beings is comparable to the apparent individuality of a vortex. It is only a pretence. That is why it is called *asmimāna*, the "conceit 'am'". In truth and fact, it is only a conceit.

This should be clear when one reflects on how the pure air gets caught up into this vortex as an in-breath, only to be ejected after a while as a foul out-breath. Portions of primary elements, predominating in earth and water, get involved with this vortex as food and drink, to make a few rounds within, only to be exuded as dirty excreta and urine. This way, one can understand the fact that what is actually there is only a certain delimitation or measuring as 'internal' and 'external'.

What sustains this process of measuring or reckoning is the duality - the notion that there are two things. So then, the supreme deliverance in this dispensation is release from this duality. Release from this duality is at the same time release from greed and hate.

Ignorance is a sort of going round, in a winding pattern, as in the case of a coil. Each round seems so different from the previous one, a peculiar novelty arising out of the forgetting or ignoring trait, characteristic of ignorance.

However much one suffers in one life cycle, when one starts another life cycle with a new birth, one is in a new world, in a new form of existence. The sufferings in the previous life cycle are almost forgotten. The vast cycle of *saṃsāra*, this endless faring round in time and space, is like a vortex.

The vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form has the same background of ignorance. In fact, it is like the seed of the entire process. A disease is diagnosed by the characteristics of the germ. Even so, the Buddha pointed out, that the basic principle underlying the *saṃsāric* vortex is traceable to the vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form, going on within our minds.

This germinal vortex, between consciousness and name-and-form, is an extremely subtle one that eludes the limitations of both time and space. This, indeed, is the timeless principle inherent in the law of *paṭicca samuppāda*, or "dependent arising". Therefore, the solution to the whole problem lies in the understanding of this law of dependent arising.

We have mentioned on a previous occasion that the *saṅkhata*, or the "prepared", becomes *asaṅkhata*, or the "unprepared", by the very understanding of the 'prepared' nature of the *saṅkhata*.¹⁷ The reason is that the prepared appears to be 'so', due to the lack of understanding of its composite and prepared nature. This might well appear a riddle.

The faring round in *saṃsāra* is the result of ignorance. That is why final deliverance is said to be brought about by **wisdom** in this dispensation. All in all, one extremely important fact emerges from this discussion, namely the fact that the etymology attributed to the term *Tathāgata* by the Buddha is highly significant.

It effectively explains why he refused to answer the tetralemma concerning the after death state of the *Tathāgata*. When a vortex has ceased, it is problematic whether it has gone somewhere or joined the great ocean. Similarly, there is a problem of identity in the case of a *Tathāgata*, even when he is living. This simile of the ocean gives us a clue to a certain much-vexed riddle-like discourse on *Nibbāna*.

Many of those scholars, who put forward views on *Nibbāna* with an eternalist bias, count on the *Pahārādasutta* found among the Eights of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.¹⁸ In fact, that discourse occurs in the *Vinaya Cūlavagga* and in the *Udāna* as well.¹⁹ In the *Pahārādasutta*, the Buddha gives a sustained simile, explaining eight marvellous qualities of this dispensation to the *asura* king *Pahārāda*, by comparing them to eight marvels of the great ocean. The fifth marvellous quality is stated as follows:

Seyyathāpi, Pahārāda, yā kāci loke savantiyo mahāsamuddam apenti, yā kāci antalikkhā dhārā papatanti, na tena mahāsamuddassa

*ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ vā paññāyati, evam eva kho, Pahārāda, bahū ce pi bhikkhū anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti, na tena nibbānadhātuyā ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ va paññāyati.*²⁰

"Just as, *Pahārāda*, however many rivers of the world may flow into the great ocean and however much torrential downpours may fall on it from the sky, no decrease or increase is apparent in the great ocean, even so, *Pahārāda*, although many monks may attain *parinibbāna* in the *Nibbāna* element without residual clinging, thereby no decrease or increase is apparent in the *Nibbāna* element."

Quite a number of scholars draw upon this passage when they put forward the view that *arahants*, after their death, find some place of refuge which never gets overcrowded. It is a ridiculous idea, utterly misconceived. It is incompatible with this *Dhamma*, which rejects both eternalist and annihilationist views. Such ideas seem to have been put forward due to a lack of appreciation of the metaphorical significance of this particular discourse and a disregard for the implications of this comparison of the *arahant* to the great ocean, in point of his suchness or *tathatā*.

In the light of these facts, we have to conclude that *Nibbāna* is actually the truth, and that *saṃsāra* is a mere perversion. That is why the *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*, from which we have quoted earlier too, is fundamentally important. It says that what the world takes as the truth, that the ariyans have seen with wisdom as untruth.

*Yaṃ pare sukhato āhu,
tad ariyā āhu dukkhato,
yaṃ pare dukkhato āhu,
tad ariyā sukhato vidū.*²¹

"What others may call bliss,
That the ariyans make known as pain.
What others may call pain,
That the ariyans have known to be bliss."
And it effectively concludes:
*Passa dhammaṃ durājānaṃ,
sampamūḷh' ettha aviddasū.*

"Behold a norm, so had to grasp,
Baffled herein are ignorant ones."

The truth of this profound declaration by the Buddha could be seen in these deeper dimensions of the meaning of *tathatā*. By way of further clarification of what we have already stated about the *Tathāgata* and the mode of answering those questions about his after death state, we may now take up the *Anurādhasutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which is of paramount importance in this issue.

According to this discourse, when the Buddha was once dwelling in the gabled hall in *Vesālī*, a monk named *Anurādha* was living in a hut in a jungle close by. One day he was confronted with a situation, which shows that even a forest dwelling monk cannot afford to ignore questions like this. A group of wandering ascetics of other sects approached him and, seated in front of him, made this pronouncement, as if to see his response.

*Yo so, āvuso Anurādha, tathāgato uttamapuriso paramapuriso paramapattipatto, taṃ tathāgataṃ imesu catūsu ṭhānesu paññāpayamāno paññāpeti: "Hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā 'ti vā 'na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā 'ti vā 'hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā 'ti vā 'neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā 'ti vā."*²²

"Friend *Anurādha*, as to that *Tathāgata*, the highest person, the supreme person, the one who has attained the supreme state, in designating him one does so in terms of these four propositions: 'the *Tathāgata* exists after death', 'the *Tathāgata* does not exist after death', 'the *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death', 'the *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death'."

What those ascetics of other sects wanted to convey, was that the state of the *Tathāgata* after death could be predicated only by one of these four propositions, constituting the tetralemma. But then Venerable *Anurādha* made the following declaration, as if to repudiate that view:

Yo so, āvuso, tathāgato uttamapuriso paramapuriso paramapatipatto, taṃ tathāgataṃ aññatr'imehi catūhi ṭhānehi paññāpayamāno paññāpeti.

"Friends, as to that *Tathāgata*, the highest person, the supreme person, the one who has attained the supreme state, in designating him one does so apart from these four propositions."

As soon as he made this statement, those ascetics of other sects made

the derogatory remark: "This must be either a new-comer to the Order, just gone forth, or a foolish incompetent elder." With this insult, they got up and left, and Venerable *Anurādha* fell to thinking: "If those wandering ascetics of other sects should question me further, how should I answer them creditably, so as to state what has been said by the Exalted One, and not to misrepresent him. How should I explain in keeping with the norm of *Dhamma*, so that there will be no justifiable occasion for impeachment."

With this doubt in mind, he approached the Buddha and related the whole episode. The Buddha, however, instead of giving a short answer, led Venerable *Anurādha* step by step to an understanding of the *Dhamma*, catechetically, by a wonderfully graded path. First of all, he convinced Venerable *Anurādha* of the three characteristics of existence.

'Taṃ kiṃ maññasi, Anurādha, rūpaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā 'ti.

'Aniccaṃ bhante'.

'Yaṃ panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukhaṃ vā 'ti.

'Dukkhaṃ bhante.'

'Yaṃ panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassituṃ: 'etaṃ mama, eso 'ham asmi, eso me attā 'ti.

'No h'etaṃ bhante'.

"What do you think, *Anurādha*, is form permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?"

"Suffering, venerable sir."

"Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine, this am I, this is my self'?"

"No indeed, venerable sir."

So also with regard to the other aggregates, the Buddha guided Venerable *Anurādha* to the correct standpoint of the *Dhamma*, in this case by three steps, and this is the first step. He put aside the problem of the *Tathāgata* for a moment and highlighted the characteristic of not-self out of the three signata, thereby convincing *Anurādha* that what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change, is not fit to be regarded as self. Now comes the second step, which is, more or less, a reflection leading to insight.

Tasmā ti ha, Anurādha, yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannam ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā, yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ rūpaṃ 'n' etaṃ mama, n' eso 'ham asmi, na meso attā 'ti evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Yā kāci vedanā atītānāgatapaccuppannā ... yā kāci saññā ... ye keci saṅkhāra... yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannam ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā, yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ 'n' etaṃ mama, n' eso 'ham asmi, na meso attā 'ti evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ.

Evaṃ passaṃ, Anurādha, sutavā ariyasāvako rūpasmim pi nibbindati, vedanāya pi nibbindati, saññāya pi nibbindati, saṅkhāresu pi nibbindati, viññāṇasmim pi nibbindati. Nibbindaṃ virajjati, virāgā vimuccati, vimuttasmim vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ hoti: 'khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparam itthattāyā'ti pajānāti.

"Therefore, *Anurādha*, any kind of form whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form should be seen as it really is, with right wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'. Any kind of feeling whatsoever, whether past, future or present ... any kind of perception ... any kind of preparations ... any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all consciousness should be seen as it really is, with right wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'.

Seeing thus, *Anurādha*, the instructed noble disciple gets disgusted of form, gets disgusted of feeling, gets disgusted of perception, gets disgusted of preparations, gets disgusted of consciousness. With disgust, he becomes dispassionate, through dispassion his mind is liberated, when it is liberated, there comes the knowledge 'it is liberated' and he understands: 'Extinct is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what is to be done, there is no more of this state of being'."

Here the Buddha is presenting a mode of reflection that culminates in *arahant*-hood. If one is prepared to accept the not-self standpoint, then what one has to do, is to see with right wisdom all the five aggregates as not-self in a most comprehensive manner. This is the second step.

Now, as the third step, the Buddha sharply addresses a series of questions to Venerable *Anurādha*, to judge how he would determine the

relation of the *Tathāgata*, or the emancipated one, to the five aggregates.

"What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard form as the *Tathāgata*?"
 "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness as the *Tathāgata*?" "No, venerable sir."

"What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in form?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from form?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in feeling?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from feeling?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in perception?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from perception?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in preparations?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from preparations?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in consciousness?" "No, venerable sir." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from consciousness?" "No, venerable sir."

"What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as one who is without form, without feeling, without perception, without preparations, without consciousness?" "No, venerable sir."

When Venerable *Anurādha* gives negative answers to all these four modes of questions, the Buddha draws the inevitable conclusion that accords with the *Dhamma*.

‘Ettha ca te, Anurādha, diṭṭheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne, kallaṃ nu te taṃ veyyākaraṇaṃ: ‘Yo so, āvuso, tathāgato uttamapuriso paramapuriso paramapattipatto, taṃ tathāgataṃ aññatr’imehi catūhi ṭhānehi paññāpayamāno paññāpeti?’ ‘No hetam bhante.’

"So then, *Anurādha*, when for you a *Tathāgata* is not to be found in truth and fact here in this very life, is it fitting for you to declare, as you did: ‘Friends, as to the *Tathāgata*, the highest person, the supreme person, the one who has attained the supreme state, in designating him one does so apart from these four propositions?’" "No, venerable sir."

This conclusion, namely that the *Tathāgata* is not to be found in truth and fact even in this very life, is one that drives terror into many who are steeped in the craving for existence. But this, it seems, is the upshot of the catechism. The rebuke of the wandering ascetics is justifiable, because the tetralemma exhausts the universe of discourse and there is no way out.

The Buddha's reproof of *Anurādha* amounts to an admission that **even here and now the *Tathāgata* does not exist in truth and fact, not to speak of his condition hereafter**. When *Anurādha* accepts this position, the Buddha expresses his approbation with the words:

Sādhu, sādhu, Anurādha, pubbe cāham Anurādha etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ. "Good, good, *Anurādha*, **formerly as well as now I make known just suffering and the cessation of suffering.**"

This declaration makes it clear that the four noble truths are the teaching proper and that terms like *Tathāgata*, *satta* and *pugala* are mere concepts. No doubt, this is a disconcerting revelation. So let us see, whether there is any possibility of salvaging the *Tathāgata*.

Now there is the word *upalabbhati* occurring in this context, which is supposed to be rather ambiguous. In fact, some prefer to render it in such a way as to mean the *Tathāgata* does exist, only that he cannot be traced.

Tathāgata, it seems, exists in truth and fact, though one cannot find him. This is the way they get round the difficulty. But then, let us examine some of the contexts in which the word occurs, to see whether there is a case for such an interpretation.

A clear-cut instance of the usage of this expression comes in the *Vajirā Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. The *arahant* nun *Vajirā* addresses the following challenge to *Māra*:

*Kinnu 'satto 'ti paccesi,
Māra diṭṭhigatannu te,
suddhasaṅkhārapuñjo, yaṃ,
nayidha sattūpalabbhati.*²³

"What do you mean by a 'being', O *Māra*,
Isn't it a bigoted view, on your part,
This is purely a heap of preparations, mind you,
No being is to be found here at all."

The context as well as the tone makes it clear that the word *upalabbhati* definitely means "not to be found", not that there is a being but one cannot find it.

We may take up another instance from the *Purābhedasutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, where the theme is the *arahant*.

*Na tassa puttā pasavo vā,
khettaṃ vatthum na vijjati,
attaṃ vāpi nirattaṃ vā,
na tasmim upalabbhati.*²⁴

"Not for him are sons and cattle,
He has no field or site to build,
In him there is not to be found,
Anything that is grasped or given up."

The words *attaṃ* and *nirattaṃ* are suggestive of the dichotomy from which the *arahant* is free. The context unmistakably proves that the expression *na upalabbhati* means "not to be found".

All this goes to show that the Buddha set aside the four questions forming the tetralemma not because they are irrelevant from the point of view of *Nibbāna*, despite the fact that he could have answered them. That is to say, not that he could not, but that he would not. How can one say that the question of an *arahant's* after death state is totally irrelevant? So that is not the reason.

The reason is that the questions are misleading. Those who posed these questions had the presumption that the word *Tathāgata* implied a truly existing being or a person. But the Buddha pointed out that the concept of a being or a person is fallacious.

Though it is fallacious, for the worldling living in an illusory unreal world, it has its place as a relative reality. Due to the very fact that it is grasped, it is binding on him. Therefore, when a worldling uses such terms as 'I' and 'mine', or a 'being' and a 'person', it is not a mere way of expression. It is a level of reality proper to the worldling's scale of values.

But for the *arahants*, who have reached the state of suchness, it is a mere concept. In fact, it becomes a mere concept in the context of the simile of the vortex and the ocean. That is to say, in the case of the *arahants*, their five aggregates resemble the flotsam and jetsam on the surface waters of a vortex already ceased at its depth.

On seeing the Buddha and the *arahants*, one might still say, as a way of saying, 'here is the Buddha', 'here are the *arahants*'. For the Buddha, the concept of a 'being' is something incompatible with his teaching from

beginning to end. But for the nonce he had to use it, as is evident from many a discourse.

The expression *aṭṭha ariyapuggalā*, "the eight noble persons", includes the *arahant* as well. Similarly in such contexts as the *Aggappasādasutta*, the term *satta* is used indiscriminately, giving way to conventional usage.

*Yāvātā, bhikkhave, sattā apadā va dipadā vā catuppadā vā bahuppadā vā rūpino vā arūpino vā saññino vā asaññino vā nevasaññināsaññino vā, tathāgato tesam aggamakkhāyati araham sammāsambuddho.*²⁵

"Monks, whatever kinds of beings there be, whether footless or two-footed, or four-footed, or many footed, with form or formless, percipient or non-percipient, or neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient, among them the *Tathāgata*, worthy and fully awakened, is called supreme".

Although the term *satta* occurs there, it is only by way of worldly parlance. In truth and fact, however, there is no 'being' as such. In a previous sermon we happened to mention a new etymology given by the Buddha to the term *loka*, or "world".²⁶ In the same way, he advanced a new etymology for the term *satta*. As mentioned in the *Rādhasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, Venerable *Rādha* once posed the following question to the Buddha:

'*Satto, satto 'ti, bhante, vuccati.. Kittāvātā nu kho, bhante, 'satto 'ti vuccati?*²⁷

"Venerable sir, it is said 'a being', 'a being'. To what extent can one be called 'a being'."

Then the Buddha explains:

Rūpe ... vedanāya ... saññāya ... saṅkhāresu ... viññāṇe kho, Rādha, yo chando yo rāgo yā nandī yā taṅhā, tatra satto, tatra visatto, tasmā 'satto 'ti vuccati.

"*Rādha*, that desire, that lust, that delight, that craving in form ... feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness, with which one is attached and thoroughly attached to it, therefore is one called a 'being'."

Here the Buddha is punning on the word *satta*, which has two meanings, a 'being' and 'the one attached'. The etymology attributed to that word by the Buddha brings out in sharp relief the attachment as well,

whereas in his redefinition of the term *loka*, he followed an etymology that stressed the disintegrating nature of the world.²⁸

Satto visatto, tasmā 'satto 'ti vuccati, "attached, thoroughly attached, therefore is one called a 'being'". Having given this new definition, the Buddha follows it up with a scintillating simile.

"Suppose, *Rādha*, some little boys and girls are playing with sand castles. So long as their lust, desire, love, thirst, passion and craving for those things have not gone away, they remain fond of them, they play with them, treat them as their property and call them their own. But when, *Rādha*, those little boys and girls have outgrown that lust, desire, love, thirst, passion and craving for those sand castles, they scatter them with their hands and feet, demolish them, dismantle them and render them unplayable."

Now comes the Buddha's admonition, based on this simile:

Evam eva kho, Rādha, tumhe rūpaṃ ... vedanaṃ ... saññaṃ ... sañkhāre ... viññāṇaṃ vikiratha vidhamatha viddhamsetha vikālanikaṃ karotha taṇhakkhayāya paṭipajjatha.

"Even so, *Rādha*, you all scatter form ... feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness, demolish it, dismantle it and render it unplayable. Practise for the destruction of craving."

And then he winds up with that highly significant conclusive remark:

Taṇhakkhayo hi, Rādha, nibbānaṃ.

"For, the destruction of craving, *Rādha*, is *Nibbāna*."

1. MI 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
2. MI 487, *Aggivaṇṇasutta*.
3. Th 120, *Isidattatheragāthā*.
4. See sermons 12.
5. Ud 75, *DutiyaLakuṇṭakabhaddiyasutta*, see sermon 2.
6. S III 59, *Upādānaparivaṭṭa Sutta* and S III 63, *Sattaṭṭhānasutta*.
7. Pj II 152, commenting on Sn 82, *Kasibhāradvājasutta*.
8. Dh 221, *Kodhavaṅga*, see sermon 9.
9. Sn 490, *Māghasutta*.
10. See sermon 3.
11. Sn 756, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*, see sermon 6.
12. Sn 9, *Uraga Sutta*.
13. See sermons 5 and 18.
14. S II 26, *Paccayasutta*.
15. Sv I 62: *tathalakkhaṇaṃ āgatoti tathāgato*.
16. MI 185, *MahāHatthipadopamasutta*.
17. See sermon 19.
18. A IV 197, *Pahārādasutta*.
19. Vin II 237 and Ud 53, *Uposathasutta*.
20. A IV 202, *Pahārādasutta*.
21. Sn 762, *Dvayatānupassanāsutta*.
22. S III 116 and S IV 380, *Anurādhasutta*.
23. S I 135, *Vajirāsutta*.
24. Sn 858, *Purābhedasutta*.
25. A II 34, *Aggappasādasutta*.
26. See sermon 20.
27. S III 190, *Sattasutta*.
28. S IV 52, *Lokapañhāsutta*.

Sermon - 22

*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 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 Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the twenty- second sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

We made an attempt, in our last sermon, to explain that the comparison of the emancipated one in this dispensation to the great ocean has a particularly deep significance. We reverted to the simile of the vortex by way of explanation. Release from the *samsāric* vortex, or the breach of the vortex of *samsāra*, is comparable to the cessation of a whirlpool. It is equivalent to the stoppage of the whirlpool of *samsāra*.

Generally, what is known as a vortex or a whirlpool, is a certain pervert, unusual or abnormal activity, which sustains a pretence of an individual existence in the great ocean with a drilling and churning as its centre. It is an aberration, functioning according to a duality, maintaining a notion of two things. As long as it exists, there is the dichotomy between a 'here' and a 'there', oneself and another. A vortex reflects a conflict between an 'internal' and an 'external' - a 'tangle within' and a 'tangle without'. The cessation of the vortex is the freedom from that duality. It is a solitude born of full integration.

We happened to discuss the meaning of the term *kevalī* in our last sermon. The cessation of a vortex is at once the resolution of the conflict between an internal and an external, of the tangle within and without. When a vortex ceases, all those conflicts subside and a state of peace prevails. What remains is the boundless great ocean, with no delimitations of a 'here' and a 'there'. As is the great ocean, so is the vortex now.

This suchness itself indicates the stoppage, the cessation or the subsidence of the vortex. There is no longer any possibility of pointing out a

‘here’ and a ‘there’ in the case of a vortex that has ceased. Its ‘thusness’ or ‘suchness’ amounts to an acceptance of the reality of the great ocean. That ‘thus-gone’ vortex, or the vortex that has now become ‘such’, is in every respect worthy of being called *tathāgata*.

The term *tādī* is also semantically related to this suchness. The *tathāgata* is sometimes referred to as *tādī* or *tādiso*, "such-like". The ‘such-like’ quality of the *tathāgata* is associated with his unshakeable deliverance of the mind. His mind remains unshaken before the eight worldly vicissitudes.

Why the Buddha refused to give an answer to the tetralemma concerning the after-death state of the *tathāgata*, should be clear to a great extent by those *sutta* quotations we brought up in our last sermon. Since the quotation *diṭṭheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne*,² "when a *tathāgata* is not to be found in truth and fact here in this very life", leads to the inference that a *tathāgata* is not to be found in reality even while he is alive, we were forced to conclude that the question ‘what happens to the *tathāgata* after his death?’ is utterly meaningless.

It is also obvious from the conclusive statement, *pubbe cāhaṃ etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ* - "formerly as well as now I make known just suffering and the cessation of suffering" - that the Buddha, in answering this question, completely put aside such conventional terms like ‘being’ and ‘person’, and solved the problem on the basis of the four noble truths, which highlight the pure quintessence of the *Dhamma* as it is.

We have to go a little deeper into this question of conventional terms like ‘being’ and ‘person’, because the statement that the *tathāgata* does not exist in truth and fact is likely to drive fear into the minds of the generality of people. In our last sermon, we gave a clue to an understanding of the sense in which this statement is made, when we quoted an extraordinary new etymology, the Buddha had advanced, for the term *satta* in the *Rādhasaṃyutta*.

*Rūpe kho, Rādha, yo chando yo rāgo yā nandī yā taṇhā, tatra satto, tatra visatto, tasmā ‘satto’ ti vuccati.*³ "Rādha, that desire, that lust, that delight, that craving in form with which one is attached and thoroughly attached, therefore is one called a ‘being’."

Here the Buddha has punned on the word *satta*, to give a new orientation to its meaning, that is, *rūpe satto visatto*, "attached and thoroughly attached to form".

From prehistoric times, the word *satta* was associated with the idea of some primordial essence called *sat*, which carried with it notions of permanent existence in the world. As derivatives from the present participle *sant* and *sat*, we get the two words *satya* and *sattva* in Sanskrit. *Satya* means "truth", or what is "true". *Sattva* means a "being" or the "state of being". We might even take *sattva* as the place from which there is a positive response or an affirmation of a state of being.

Due to the semantic affinity between *satya*, "truth", and *sattva*, "being", an absolute reality had been granted to the term *sattva* from ancient times. But according to the new etymology advanced by the Buddha, the term *sattva* is given only a relative reality within limits, that is to say, it is 'real' only in a limited and a relative sense. The above quotation from the *Rādhasamyutta* makes it clear that a being exists only so long as there is that desire, lust, delight and craving in the five aggregates.

Alternatively, when there is no desire, or lust, or delight, or craving for any of the five aggregates, there is no 'being'. That is why we say that it is real only in a limited and relative sense.

When a thing is dependent on another thing, it is relative and for that very reason it has a limited applicability and is not absolute. Here, in this case, the dependence is on desire or attachment. As long as there is desire or attachment, there is a 'being', and when it is not there, there is no 'being'. So from this we can well infer that the *tathāgata* is not a 'being' by virtue of the very definition he had given to the term *satta*.

The other day, we briefly quoted a certain simile from the *Rādhasutta* itself, but could not explain it sufficiently. The Buddha gives this simile just after advancing the above new definition.

"Suppose, *Rādha*, some little boys and girls are playing with sandcastles. So long as their lust, desire, love, thirst, passion and craving for those things have not gone away, they remain fond of them, they play with them, treat them as their property and call them their own. But when, *Rādha*, those little boys and girls have outgrown that lust, desire, love, thirst, passion and craving for those sandcastles, they scatter them with their hands and feet, demolish them, dismantle them and render them unplayable."

When we reflect upon the meaning of this simile from the point of view of *Dhamma*, it seems that for those little boys and girls, sandcastles were real things, as long as they had ignorance and craving with regard to them. When they grew wiser and outgrew craving, those sandcastles became unreal. That is why they destroyed them.

The untaught worldling is in a similar situation. So long as he is attached to these five aggregates and has not comprehended their impermanent, suffering-fraught and not-self nature, they are real for him. He is bound by his own grasping.

The reality of the law of *kamma*, of merit and demerit, follows from that very grasping. The dictum *upādānapaccayā bhavo*, "dependent on grasping is existence", becomes meaningful in this context. There is an existence because there is grasping. But at whatever point of time wisdom dawned and craving faded away, all those things tend to become unreal and there is not even a 'being', as there is no real 'state of being'.

This mode of exposition receives support from the *Kaccāyanagottasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The way the Buddha has defined right view in that discourse is highly significant. We have already discussed this *sutta* on an earlier occasion.⁴ Suffice it to remind ourselves of the basic maxim.

*'Dukkham eva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati, dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhatī'ti na kaṅkhati na vicikicchati aparappaccayā ñāṇam ev' assa ettha hoti. Ettāvatā kho, Kaccāyana, sammā diṭṭhi hoti.'*⁵

"It is only suffering that arises and suffering that ceases. Understanding thus, one does not doubt, one does not waver, and there is in him only the knowledge that is not dependent on another. It is in so far, *Kaccāyana*, that one has right view."

What is called *aparappaccayā ñāṇa* is that knowledge of realization by oneself for which one is not dependent on another. The noble disciple wins to such a knowledge of realization in regard to this fact, namely, that it is only a question of suffering and its cessation. The right view mentioned in this context is the supramundane right view, and not that right view which takes *kamma* as one's own, *kammassakatā sammā diṭṭhi*, implying notions of 'I' and 'mine'.

This supramundane right view brings out the norm of *Dhamma* as it is. Being unable to understand this norm of *Dhamma*, contemporary ascetics

and brahmins, and even some monks themselves, accused the Buddha of being an annihilationist. They brought up groundless allegations. There was also the opposite reaction of seeking refuge in a form of eternalism, through fear of being branded as annihilationists.

Sometimes the Buddha answered those wrong accusations in unmistakable terms. We come across such an instance in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. First of all the Buddha qualifies the emancipated one in his dispensation with the terms *ariyo pannaddhajo pannabhāro viṣaṃyutto*.⁶ Once the conceit 'am', *asmimāna*, is abandoned, this noble one is called *pannaddhajo*, "one who has put down the flag of conceit". He has "laid down the burden", *pannabhāro*, and is "disjoined", *viṣaṃyutto*, from the fetters of existence. About this emancipated one, he now makes the following declaration:

Evaṃ vimuttacittaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ sa-indā devā sa-pajāpatikā sa-brahmakā anvesaṃ nādhigacchanti: idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññānaṃ'ti. Taṃ kissa hetu? Diṭṭhe vāhaṃ, bhikkhave, dhamme tathāgato ananuvejjo'ti vadāmi.

Evaṃvādiṃ kho maṃ, bhikkhave, evaṃ akkhāyiṃ eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā asatā tucchā musā abhūtena abbhācikkhanti: venayiko samaṇo Gotamo, sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpeti.

"A monk, thus released in mind, O! monks, gods including *Indra*, *Pajāpati* and *Brahmā*, are unable to trace in their search to be able to say of him: 'the consciousness of this thus-gone-one is dependent on this. And why is that so? Monks, I say, even here and now the *Tathāgata* is not to be found.

When I say thus, when I teach thus, some recluses and brahmins wrongly and falsely accuse me with the following unfounded allegation: 'recluse *Gotama* is an annihilationist, he lays down an annihilation, a destruction and non-existence of a truly existing being'."

As in the *Anurādha Sutta*, here too the Buddha concludes with the highly significant statement of his stance, *pubbe cāhaṃ etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*, "formerly as well as now I make known just suffering and the cessation of suffering".

Though the statements in the *suttas* follow this trend, it seems that the commentator himself was scared to bring out the correct position in his commentary. The fact that he sets out with some trepidation is clear

enough from the way he tackles the term *tathāgata* in his commentary to the above discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In commenting on the word *tathāgatassa* in the relevant context, he makes the following observation:

*Tathāgatassā'ti ettha satto pi tathāgato'ti adhippeto, uttamapuggalo khīṇāsavo pi.*⁷ "Tathāgata's, herein, a being also is meant by the term *tathāgata*, as well as the highest person, the influx-free *arahant*."

Just as he gives two meanings to the word *tathāgata*, Venerable *Buddhaghosa* attributes two meanings to the word *anānūvejjo* as well. *Anānūvejjo'ti asaṃvijjamaṇo vā avindeyyo vā. Tathāgato'ti hi satte gahite asaṃvijjamaṇo'ti attho vaṭṭati, khīṇāsavo gahite avindeyyo'ti attho vaṭṭati.* "Anānūvejjo - 'non-existing' or 'untraceable'. When by the word *tathāgata* a being is meant, the sense 'non existing' is fitting; and when the influx-free one is meant, the sense 'untraceable' is fitting."

According to this exegesis, the term *tathāgata* in contexts where it means a 'being' is to be understood as non-existing, *asaṃvijjamaṇo*, which is equivalent in sense to the expression *anupalabbhiyamāne*, discussed above. On the other hand, the other sense attributed to it is *avindeyyo*, which somehow grants the existence but suggests that it is 'untraceable'. In other words, the *Tathāgata* exists, but he cannot be traced or found out.

The commentator opines that the term in question has to be understood in two different senses, according to contexts. In order to substantiate his view, the commentator attributes the following apocryphal explanation to the Buddha.

Bhikkhave, ahaü diññheva dhamme dharamānakaü yeva khāõāsavaü vipassāõavasena indādāhi avindiyaü vadāmi. Na hi sa-indā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā anvesantāpi khāõāsavassa vipassanācittaü vā maggacittaü vā phalacittaü vā, idaü nāma ārammaõaü nissāya vattatā'ti jānituü sakkonti. Te appañisandhikassa parinibbutassa kiü jānissanti?

"Monks, I say that even here and now the influx-free one, while he is alive, is untraceable by *Indra* and others in regard to his consciousness. Gods, including *Indra*, *Brahmā* and *Pajāpati* are indeed unable in their search to find out either the insight consciousness, or the path consciousness, or the fruition consciousness, to be able to say: 'it is dependent

on this object'. How then could they find out the consciousness of one who has attained *parinibbāna* with no possibility of conception?"

Presumably, the argument is that, since the consciousness of the *arahant* is untraceable by the gods while he is alive, it is all the more difficult for them to find it out when he has attained *parinibbāna*. That is to say, the *arahant* somehow exists, even after his *parinibbāna*, only that he cannot be traced.

It is obvious from this commentarial trend that the commentator finds himself on the horns of a dilemma, because of his inability to grasp an extremely deep dimension of linguistic usage. The Buddha's forceful and candid declaration was too much for him. Probably, he demurred out of excessive faith, but his stance is not in accordance with the *Dhamma*. It falls short of right view.

Let us now recapitulate the correct position in the light of the above *sutta* passage. The Buddha declares at the very outset that the emancipated monk undergoes a significant change by virtue of the fact that he has abandoned the conceit 'am'. That *Tathāgata*, that emancipated monk, who has put down the flag of conceit, laid down the burden of the five aggregates, and won release from the fetters to existence, defies definition and eludes categorization. Why is that?

As we pointed out earlier, the word *asmi* constitutes the very basis of the entire grammatical structure.⁸ *Asmi*, or "am", is the basic peg, which stands for the first person. The second person and the third person come later. So *asmi* is basic to the grammatical structure. When this basic peg is uprooted, the emancipated monk reaches that state of freedom from the vortex. There is no dichotomy to sustain a vortex, no two teams to keep up the vortical interplay. Where there is no turning round, there is no room for designation, and this is the implication of the phrase *vaṭṭam tesam n'atthi paññāpanāya*, which we happened to quote on a previous occasion.⁹ For the *arahants* there is no vortex whereby to designate.

That is why the *Tathāgata*, in this very life, is said to have transcended the state of a 'being'. Only as a way of speaking in terms of worldly parlance one cannot help referring to him as a 'being'. But in truth and fact, his position is otherwise.

Going by worldly usage, one might indiscriminately think of applying the four propositions of the tetralemma to the *Tathāgata* as well. But it is precisely in this context that the questioner's presumptions are fully

exposed. The fact that he has misconceived the implications of the terms *satta* and *Tathāgata* is best revealed by the very question whether the *Tathāgata* exists after his death. It shows that he presumes the *Tathāgata* to be existing in truth and fact, and if so, he has either to go on existing or be annihilated after death. Here, then, we have an extremely deep dimension of linguistic usage.

The commentary says that gods and *Brahmās* cannot find the *Tathāgata* in point of his consciousness. The *Tathāgata* defies definition due to his abandonment of proliferations of cravings, conceits and views. Cravings, conceits and views, which bring in attachments, bindings and entanglements to justify the usage of terms like *satta*, 'being', and *puggala*, 'person', are extinct in the *Tathāgata*. That is why he is beyond reckoning.

In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* the Buddha makes the following declaration about himself, after refuting the sixty-two views, catching them all in one super-net.

*Ucchinnabhavanettiko, bhikkhave, tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yav'assa kāyo ṭhassati tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. Kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvītapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā.*¹⁰

"Monks, the *Tathāgata's* body stands with its leading factor in becoming cut off at the root. As long as his body stands, gods and men will see him. With the breaking up of his body, after the extinction of his life, gods and men will not see him."

And then he follows up this promulgation with a simile.

Seyyathā pi, bhikkhave, ambapiṇḍiyā vaṇṭacchinnāya yāni kānici ambāni vaṇṭūpanibandhanāni, sabbāni tāni tad anvayāni bhavanti, evam eva kho, bhikkhave, ucchinnabhavanettiko tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yav'assa kāyo ṭhassati tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. Kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvītapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā.

"Just as, monks, in the case of a bunch of mangoes, when its stalk is cut off, whatever mangoes that were connected with the stalk would all of them be likewise cut off, even so, monks, stands the *Tathāgata's* body with its leading factor in becoming cut off at the root. As long as his body stands, gods and men will see him. With the breaking up of his body, after the extinction of his life, gods and men will not see him."

The simile employed serves to bring out the fact that the *Tathāgata's*

body stands with its leading factor in becoming eradicated. Here it is said that gods and men see the *Tathāgata* while he is alive. But the implications of this statement should be understood within the context of the similes given.

The reference here is to a tree uprooted, one that simply stands cut off at the root. In regard to each aggregate of the Buddha and other emancipated ones, it is clearly stated that it is cut off at the root, *ucchinnamūlo*, that it is like a palm tree divested of its site *tālāvatthukato*.¹¹

In the case of a palm tree, deprived of its natural site but still left standing, anyone seeing it from afar would mistake it for an actual tree that is growing. It is the same idea that emerges from the simile of the bunch of mangoes. The *Tathāgata* is comparable to a bunch of mangoes with its stalk cut off.

What then is meant by the statement that gods and men see him? Their seeing is limited to the seeing of his body. For many, the concept of seeing the *Tathāgata* is just this seeing of his physical body. Of course, we do not find in this discourse any prediction that we can see him after five-thousand years.

Whatever it may be, here we seem to have some deep idea underlying this discourse. An extremely important clue to a correct understanding of this *Dhamma*, one that helps to straighten up right view, lies beneath this problem of the Buddha's refusal to answer the tetralemma concerning the *Tathāgata*. This fact comes to light in the *Yamaka Sutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*.

A monk named *Yamaka* conceived the evil view, the distorted view, *tathāhaṃ bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānāmi, yathā khīṇāsavo bhikkhu kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati, na hoti paraṃ maraṇā*.¹² "As I understand the *Dhamma* taught by the Exalted One, an influx-free monk, with the breaking up of his body, is annihilated and perishes, he does not exist after death."

He went about saying that the Buddha had declared that the emancipated monk is annihilated at death. Other monks, on hearing this, tried their best to dispel his wrong view, saying that the Buddha had never declared so, but it was in vain. At last they approached Venerable *Sāriputta* and begged him to handle the situation.

Then Venerable *Sāriputta* came there, and after ascertaining the fact, proceeded to dispel Venerable *Yamaka*'s wrong view by getting him to answer a series of questions. The first set of questions happened to be identical with the one the Buddha had put forward in Venerable *Anurādha*'s case, namely a catechism on the three characteristics. We have already quoted it step by step, for facility of understanding.¹³ Suffice it to mention, in brief, that it served to convince Venerable *Yamaka* of the fact that whatever is impermanent, suffering and subject to change, is not fit to be looked upon as 'this is mine, this am I, and this is my self'.

The first step, therefore, consisted in emphasizing the not self characteristic through a catechism on the three signata. The next step was to get Venerable *Yamaka* to reflect on this not self characteristic in eleven ways, according to the standard formula.

Tasmātiha, āvuso Yamaka, yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ va sukhumāṃ vā hīnaṃ vā panītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ rūpaṃ n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'ham asmi, na me so attā'ti evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammāpaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Ya kāci vedanā ... ya kāci saññā ... ye keci saṅkhāra ... yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ va sukhumāṃ vā hīnaṃ vā panītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'ham asmi, na me so attā'ti evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammāpaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ.

Evaṃ passaṃ, āvuso Yamaka, sutavā ariyasāvako rūpasmiṃ nibbindati, vedanāya nibbindati, saññāya nibbindati, saṅkhāresu nibbindati, viññāṇasmiṃ nibbindati. Nibbindam virajjati, virāgā vimuccati, vimuttasmiṃ vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ hoti. Khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti pajānāti.

"Therefore, friend *Yamaka*, any kind of form whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form must be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus: 'this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'. Any kind of feeling whatsoever ... any kind of perception whatsoever ... any kind of preparations whatsoever ... any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all consciousness must be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus: 'this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'."

"Seeing thus, friend *Yamaka*, the instructed noble disciple gets dis-

gusted of form, gets disgusted of feeling, gets disgusted of perception, gets disgusted of preparations, gets disgusted of consciousness. Being disgusted, he becomes dispassionate, through dispassion his mind is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge 'it is liberated' and he understands: 'extinct is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this state of being'."

As the third step in his interrogation of Venerable *Yamaka*, Venerable *Sāriputta* poses the same questions which the Buddha addressed to Venerable *Anurādhā*.

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard form as the *Tathāgata*?" "No, friend." "Do you regard feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness as the *Tathāgata*?" "No, friend."

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in form?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from form?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in feeling?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from feeling?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in perception?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from perception?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in preparations?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from preparations?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in consciousness?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from consciousness?" "No, friend."

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness as constituting the *Tathāgata*?" "No, friend." "What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as one who is devoid of form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness?" "No, friend."

It was at this juncture that Venerable *Sāriputta* puts this conclusive question to Venerable *Yamaka* in order to drive the crucial point home.

"But then, friend *Yamaka*, now that for you a *Tathāgata* is not to be found in truth and fact here in this very life, is it proper for you to declare: 'As I understand *Dhamma* taught by the Exalted One, an influx-free monk is annihilated and destroyed when the body breaks up and does not exist after death'?"

At last, Venerable *Yamaka* confesses "Formerly, friend *Sāriputta*, I did hold that evil view, ignorant as I was. But now that I have heard this

Dhamma sermon of the Venerable *Sāriputta*, I have given up that evil view and have gained an understanding of the *Dhamma*."

As if to get a confirmation of Venerable *Yamaka*'s present stance, Venerable *Sāriputta* continues: "If, friend *Yamaka*, they were to ask you the question: 'Friend *Yamaka*, as to that monk, the influx-free *arahant*, what happens to him with the breaking up of the body after death?' Being asked thus, what would you answer?"

"If they were to ask me that question, friend *Sāriputta*, I would answer in this way: Friends, form is impermanent, what is impermanent is suffering, what is suffering has ceased and passed away. Feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness is impermanent, what is impermanent is suffering, what is suffering has ceased and passed away. Thus questioned, I would answer in such a way."

Be it noted that, in this conclusive answer, there is no mention whatsoever of a *Tathāgata*, a *satta*, or a *puggala*.

Now at this reply, Venerable *Sāriputta* expresses his approbation: "Good, good, friend *Yamaka*, well then, friend *Yamaka*, I will bring up a simile for you that you may grasp this meaning all the more clearly.

Suppose, friend *Yamaka*, there was a householder or a householder's son, prosperous, with much wealth and property, protected by a bodyguard. Then some man would come by who wished to ruin him, to harm him, to imperil him, to deprive him of life. And it would occur to that man: 'This householder or householder's son is prosperous, with much wealth and property, he has his bodyguard, it is not easy to deprive him of his life by force. What if I were to get close to him and take his life?'

Then he would approach that householder or householder's son and say to him: 'Would you take me on as a servant, sir?' Then the householder or householder's son would take him on as a servant. The man would serve him, rising up before him, going to bed after him, being at his beck and call, pleasing in his conduct, endearing in his speech. The householder or householder's son would regard him as a friend, an intimate friend, and would place trust in him. But once the man has ascertained that the householder or householder's son has trust in him, he waits for an opportunity to find him alone and kills him with a sharp knife."

Now this is the simile. Based on this deep simile, Venerable *Sāriputta*

puts the following questions to Venerable *Yamaka* to see whether he has grasped the moral behind it.

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, when that man approached that householder or householder's son and said to him 'would you take me on as a servant, sir?', wasn't he a murderer even then, though the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer'? And when the man was serving him, rising up before him and going to bed after him, being at his beck and call, pleasing in his conduct and endearing in his speech, wasn't he a murderer then too, though the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer'? And when the man, finding him alone, took his life with a sharp knife, wasn't he a murderer then too, though the other did not know him as 'my murderer'?" Venerable *Yamaka* answers "yes, friend", by way of assent to all these matter-of-fact questions.

It was then, that Venerable *Sāriputta* comes out with the full significance of this simile, portraying the uninstructed worldling in the same light as that naively unsuspecting and ignorant householder or householder's son.

"So too, friend *Yamaka*, the uninstructed worldling, who has no regard for the noble ones, and is unskilled and undisciplined in their *Dhamma*, who has no regard for good men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their *Dhamma*, regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He regards feeling as self ... perception as self ... preparations as self ... consciousness as self ...

He does not understand, as it really is, impermanent form as 'impermanent form', impermanent feeling as 'impermanent feeling', impermanent perception as 'impermanent perception', impermanent preparations as 'impermanent preparations', impermanent consciousness as 'impermanent consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, painful form as 'painful form', painful feeling as 'painful feeling', painful perception as 'painful perception', painful preparations as 'painful preparations', painful consciousness as 'painful consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, selfless form as 'selfless form', selfless feeling as 'selfless feeling', selfless perception as 'selfless perception', selfless preparations as 'selfless preparations', selfless consciousness as 'selfless consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, prepared form as ‘prepared form’, prepared feeling as ‘prepared feeling’, prepared perception as ‘prepared perception’, prepared preparations as ‘prepared preparations’, prepared consciousness as ‘prepared consciousness’.

He does not understand, as it really is, murderous form as ‘murderous form’, murderous feeling as ‘murderous feeling’, murderous perception as ‘murderous perception’, murderous preparations as ‘murderous preparations’, murderous consciousness as ‘murderous consciousness’.

This, then, is what the attitude of the uninstructed worldling amounts to. Venerable *Sāriputta* now goes on to describe the consequences of such an attitude for the worldling.

So rāpaü upeti upādiyati adhiññhàti attà me 'ti, vedanaü ... saṃpāü ... saikhàre ... viṃpāḍāü upeti upādiyati adhiññhàti attà me 'ti. Tassime paṃcupādānakkhandhà upetā upādiḍḍhā dāgharattaü ahitāya dukkhāya saüvattanti.

"He becomes committed to form, grasps it and takes a stand upon it as ‘my self’. He becomes committed to feeling ... to perception ... to preparations ... to consciousness, grasps it and takes a stand upon it as ‘my self’. These five aggregates of grasping, to which he becomes committed, and which he grasps, lead to his harm and suffering for a long time."

Then Venerable *Sāriputta* contrasts it with the standpoint of the instructed disciple.

"But, friend, the instructed noble disciple, who has regard for the noble ones, who is skilled and disciplined in their *Dhamma*, who has regard for good men and is skilled and disciplined in their *Dhamma*, does not regard form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He does not regard feeling as self ... perception as self ... preparations as self ... consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

He understands, as it really is, impermanent form as ‘impermanent form’, impermanent feeling as ‘impermanent feeling’, impermanent perception as ‘impermanent perception’, impermanent preparations as ‘impermanent preparations’, impermanent consciousness as ‘impermanent consciousness’.

He understands, as it really is, painful form as ‘painful form’, painful feeling as ‘painful feeling’, painful perception as ‘painful perception’,

painful preparations as 'painful preparations', painful consciousness as 'painful consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, selfless form as 'selfless form', selfless feeling as 'selfless feeling', selfless perception as 'selfless perception', selfless preparations as 'selfless preparations', selfless consciousness as 'selfless consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, prepared form as 'prepared form', prepared feeling as 'prepared feeling', prepared perception as 'prepared perception', prepared preparations as 'prepared preparations', prepared consciousness as 'prepared consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, murderous form as 'murderous form', murderous feeling as 'murderous feeling', murderous perception as 'murderous perception', murderous preparations as 'murderous preparations', murderous consciousness as 'murderous consciousness'."

He does not become committed to form, does not grasp it, does not take a stand upon it as 'my self'. He does not become committed to feeling ... to perception ... to preparations ... to consciousness, does not grasp it, does not take a stand upon it as 'my self'. These five aggregates of grasping, to which he does not become committed, which he does not grasp, lead to his welfare and happiness for a long time."

What Venerable *Sāriputta* wanted to prove, was the fact that everyone of the five aggregates is a murderer, though the worldlings, ignorant of the true state of affairs, pride themselves on each of them, saying 'this is mine, this am I and this is my self'. As the grand finale of this instructive discourse comes the following wonderful declaration by Venerable *Yamaka*.

"Such things do happen, friend *Sāriputta*, to those venerable ones who have sympathetic and benevolent fellow monks in the holy life, like you, to admonish and instruct, so much so that, on hearing this *Dhamma* sermon of the Venerable *Sāriputta*, my mind is liberated from the influxes by non-grasping."

This might sound extremely strange in this age of scepticism regarding such intrinsic qualities of the *Dhamma* like *sandiṭṭhika*, "visible here and now", *akālika*, "timeless", and *ehi-passika*, "inviting to come and see". But all the same we have to grant the fact that this discourse, which begins with a Venerable *Yamaka* who is bigoted with such a virulent evil view,

which even his fellow monks found it difficult to dispel, concludes, as we saw, with this grand finale of a Venerable *Yamaka* joyfully declaring his attainment of *arahant*-hood.

This episode bears testimony to the fact that the tetralemma concerning the *Tathāgata*'s after-death state has beneath it an extremely valuable criterion, proper to this *Dhamma*. There are some who are even scared to discuss this topic, perhaps due to unbalanced faith - faith unwarranted by wisdom. The tetralemma, however, reveals on analysis a wealth of valuable *Dhamma* material that goes to purify one's right view. That is why the Venerable *Yamaka* ended up as an *arahant*.

So this discourse, also, is further proof of the fact that the Buddha's solution to the problem of the indeterminate points actually took the form of a disquisition on voidness. Such expositions fall into the category called *suññatapaṭisamṃyuttā suttantā*, "discourses dealing with voidness". This category of discourses avoids the conventional worldly usages, such as *satta*, "being", and *puggala*, "person", and highlights the teachings on the four noble truths, which bring out the nature of things 'as they are'.

Generally, such discourses instil fear into the minds of worldlings, so much so that even during the Buddha's time there were those recorded instances of misconstruing and misinterpretation. It is in this light that we have to appreciate the Buddha's prediction that in the future there will be monks who would not like to listen or lend ear to those deep and profound discourses of the Buddha, pertaining to the supramundane and dealing with the void.

*Puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, bhavissanti bhikkhū anāgamaddhānaṃ abhāvitakāya abhāvitasilā abhāvitacittā abhāvitapaññā, te abhāvitakāyā samānā abhāvitasilā abhāvitacittā abhāvitapaññā ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatapaṭisamṃyuttā, tesu bhaññamānesu na sussūsanti, na sotam odahissanti, na aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhapessanti, na ca te dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuniṭabbaṃ maññissanti.*¹⁴

"And moreover, monks, there will be in the future those monks who, being undeveloped in bodily conduct, being undeveloped in morality, being undeveloped in concentration, being undeveloped in wisdom, would not like to listen, to lend ear or to make an attempt to understand and deem it fit to learn when those discourses preached by the *Tathāgata*, which are deep, profound in meaning, supramundane and dealing with the

void, are being recited."

This brings us to an extremely deep dimension of this *Dhamma*. By way of clarification, we may allude to a kind of exorcism practiced by some traditional devil dancers. At the end of an all-night session of devil dancing, the mediating priest goes round, exorcising the spirits from the house with fistfuls of a highly inflammable incense powder. Blazing flames arise, as he sprinkles that powder onto the lighted torch, directing the flames at every nook and corner of the house. Some onlookers even get scared that he is trying to set the house on fire. But actually no harm is done.

Well, the Buddha, too, as the mediating priest of the three realms, had to conduct a similar exorcising ritual over linguistic conventions, aiming at some words in particular. It is true that he made use of conventional language in order to convey his teaching. But his *Dhamma* proper was one that transcended logic, *atakkāvacarō*.¹⁵

It happened to be a *Dhamma* that soared well above the limitations of grammar and logic, and analytically exposed their very structure. The marvel of the *Dhamma* is in its very inaccessibility to logic. That is why it defied the four-cornered logic of the tetralemma. It refused to be cornered and went beyond the concepts of a 'being' or a 'self'. The *saṃsāric* vortex was breached and concepts themselves were transcended.

Now this is the exorcism the Buddha had to carry out. He smoked out the term *attā*, "self", so dear to the whole world. Of course, he could not help making use of that word as such. In fact there is an entire chapter in the *Dhammapada* entitled *Attavagga*.¹⁶ But it must be emphasized that the term in that context does not refer to a permanent self. It stands for 'oneself'. Some who mistakenly rendered it as 'self', ended up in difficulties. Take for instance the following verse.

*Attā hi attano nātho,
ko hi nātho paro siyā,
attanā hi sudantena,
nāthaṃ labhati dullabhaṃ.*¹⁷

"Oneself, indeed, is one's own saviour,
What other saviour could there be?
Even in oneself, disciplined well,
One finds that saviour, so hard to find."

Those who render the above verse literally, with a self-bias, would get stuck when confronted with the following verse in the *Bālavagga*, the "chapter of the fool".

*Puttā m'atthi, dhanam m'atthi,
iti bālo vihaññati,
attā hi attano n'atthi,
kuto puttā, kuto dhanam?*¹⁸

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

Whereas the former verse says *attā hi attano nātho*, here we find the statement *attā hi attano n'atthi*. If one ignores the reflexive sense and translates the former line with something like "self is the lord of self", one will be at a loss to translate the seemingly contradictory statement "even self is not owned by self".

At times, the Buddha had to be incisive in regard to some words, which the worldlings are prone to misunderstand and misinterpret. We have already discussed at length the significance of such terms as *satta* and *tathāgata*, with reference to their etymological background. *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, or "personality view", masquerades even behind the term *tathāgata*, and that is why they raise such ill-founded questions. That is also why one is averse to penetrate into the meanings of these deep discourses.

Like the term *tathāgata*, the term *loka* also had insinuations of a self-bias. The Buddha, as we saw, performed the same ritual of exorcism to smoke out those insinuations. His definition of the ‘world’ with reference to the six sense-bases is a corrective to that erroneous concept.¹⁹

Among the indeterminate points, too, we find questions relating to the nature of the world, such as *sassato loko - asassato loko*, "the world is eternal - the world is not eternal", and *antavā loko - anantavā loko*, "the world is finite - the world is infinite".²⁰ In all such contexts, the questioner had the prejudice of the conventional concept of the world. The commentaries refer to it as *cakkavāḷaloka*, the common concept of "world system".²¹ But the Buddha advanced a profound definition of the concept of the world with reference to the six bases of sense-contact.

In this connection, we come across a highly significant discourse in the *Saḷāyatanavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. There we find the Buddha making the following declaration to the monks.

*Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñātayyaṃ, daṭṭhayaṃ, patteyyan'ti vadāmi. Na ca panāhaṃ, bhikkhave, appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ vadāmi.*²²

"Monks, I do not say that by travelling one can come to know or see or reach the end of the world. Nor do I say that without reaching the end of the world one can put an end to suffering."

After this riddle-like pronouncement, the Buddha gets up and retires to the monastery. We came across this kind of problematic situation earlier too. Most probably this is a device of the Buddha as the teacher to give his disciples an opportunity to train in the art of analytical exposition of the *Dhamma*. After the Buddha had left, those monks, perplexed by this terse and tantalizing declaration, approached Venerable *Ānanda* and begged him to expound its meaning at length. With some modest hesitation, as usual, Venerable *Ānanda* agreed and came out with the way he himself understood the significance of the Buddha's declaration in the following words.

Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko. Kena c'āvuso lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī?

Cakkhunā kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, sotena ... ghānena ... jivhāya ... kāyena ... manena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī. Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko.

"Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the noble ones is called 'the world'. By what, friends, has one a perception of the world and a conceit of the world?"

By the eye, friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, by the ear ... by the nose ... by the tongue ... by the body ... by the mind, friends one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world. That, friends, by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the noble ones is called 'the world'."

It seems, then, that the definition of the world in the discipline of the

noble ones is one that accords with radical attention, *yoniso manasikāra*, whereas the concept of the world as upheld in those indeterminate points is born of wrong attention, *ayoniso manasikāra*.

In the present age, too, scientists, when they speak of an 'end of the world', entertain presumptions based on wrong attention.

When those monks who listened to Venerable *Ānanda's* exposition reported it to the Buddha, he fully endorsed it. This definition, therefore, is as authentic as the word of the Buddha himself and conclusive enough. It is on the basis of the six sense-bases that the world has a perception of the 'world' and a conceit of the 'world'.

The conceit here meant is not pride as such, but the measuring characteristic of worldly concepts. For instance, there is this basic scale of measuring length: The inch, the span, the foot, the cubit and the fathom. These measurements presuppose this body to be a measuring rod. In fact, all scales of measurement, in some way or other, relate to one or the other of the six sense-bases. That is why the above definition of the world is on the side of radical attention.

The worldling's concept of the world, conventionally so called, is the product of wrong or non-radical attention. It is unreal to the extent that it is founded on the notion of the compact, *ghanasaññā*. The existence of the world, as a whole, follows the norm of arising and ceasing. It is by ignoring this norm that the notion of the compact receives acceptance.

Two persons are watching a magic kettle on display at a science exhibition. Water is endlessly flowing from the magic kettle to a basin. One is waiting until the kettle gets empty, while the other waits to see the basin overflowing. Neither of their wishes is fulfilled. Why? Because a hidden tube conducts the water in the basin back again to the kettle. So the magic kettle never gets emptied and the basin never overflows. This is the secret of the magic kettle.

The world also is such a magic kettle. Gigantic world systems contract and expand in cyclic fashion. In the ancient term for world systems, *cakkavāḷa*, this cyclic nature is already insinuated. Taken in a broader sense, the existence or continuity of the world is cyclic, as indicated by the two terms *saṃvaṭṭa* and *vivaṭṭa*, "contraction" and "expansion". In both these terms, the significant word *vaṭṭa*, suggestive of "turning round", is seen to occur. It is as good as saying "rise and fall", *udayabbaya*.

When one world system gets destroyed, another world system gets crystallized, as it were. We hear of *Brahmā* mansions emerging.²³ So the existence of the world is a continuous process of arising and ceasing. It is in a cycle. How can one find a point of beginning in a cycle? Can one speak of it as 'eternal' or 'non-eternal'? The question as a whole is fallacious.

On the other hand the Buddha's definition of the term *loka*, based on the etymology *lujjati, palujjati'ti loko*, is quite apt and meaningful.²⁴ The world is all the time in a process of disintegration. It is by ignoring this disintegrating nature and by overemphasizing the arising aspect that the ordinary uninstructed worldling speaks of a 'world' as it is conventionally understood. The world is afflicted by this process of arising and passing away in every moment of its existence.

It is to be found in our breathing, too. Our entire body vibrates to the rhythm of this rise and fall. That is why the Buddha offered us a redefinition of the world. According to the terminology of the noble ones, the world is to be redefined with reference to the six bases of sense-contact. This includes mind and mind-objects as well. In fact, the range of the six bases of sense-contact is all comprehending. Nothing falls outside of it.

1. MI 436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
2. S III 118 and S IV 384, *Anurādhasutta*.
3. S III 190, *Sattasutta*.
4. See sermon 4.
5. S II 17, *Kaccāyanagottasutta*.
6. M I 139, *Alagaddūpamasutta*.
7. Ps II 117.
8. See sermons 10 and 13.
9. M I 141, *Alagaddūpamasutta*; see sermon 2 and sermon 21.
10. D I 46, *Brahmajāla Sutta*.
11. M I 139, *Alagaddūpamasutta*.
12. S III 109, *Yamakasutta*.
13. See sermon 21.
14. A III 107, *Tatiya-anāgatabhayasutta*; cf. also S II 267, *Āṇisutta*.
15. M I 167, *Ariyapariyesanasutta*.
16. Dhp 157-166 make up the 12th chapter of Dhp, the *Attavagga*.
17. Dhp 160, *Attavagga*.
18. Dhp 62, *Bālavagga*.
19. S I 41, *Lokasutta*, see also sermon 4; S IV 39, *Samiddhisutta*, see also sermon 20.
20. E.g. at M I 426, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
21. Spk I 116.
22. S IV 93, *Lokakāmaguṇasutta*.
23. D I 17, *Brahmajālasutta*.
24. S IV 52, *Lokapañhāsutta*, see sermon 20.

Sermon - 23

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

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo 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 Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the twenty-third sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

The other day, we brought up quotations to prove that *Nibbāna*, as the cessation of becoming, carries no implications of a nihilist or annihilationist view because the *Tathāgata* has transcended the concept of a being.

It became evident, from those quotations, that to assert with an eternalist bias, the proposition that the *Tathāgata* exists after death, simply because he is referred to as a being, or a person, in the discourses, is contrary to the spirit of the *Dhamma*. The fact that the *arahant*, who has done away with the latencies to conceits of 'I' and 'mine', still continues to use even the words 'I' and 'mine', only as a concession to worldly conventions and common parlance, came to light from the *Arahantasutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, quoted on an earlier occasion.

To remind ourselves of the relevant section of that quotation, we may hark back to the following lines:

'Ahaṃ vadāmi'ti pi so vadeyya,
'Mamaṃ vadantī'ti pi so vadeyya,
Loke samaññaṃ kusalo veditvā,
*Vohāramattena so vohareyya.*²

"He might still say: 'I speak',
He might also say: 'They speak to me',
Being skilful in knowing the worldly parlance,
He uses such terms merely as a convention."

The philosophy of voidness that emerges from those discourses which declare that in reality there is no *Tathāgata*, we compared to the blazing flames arising from the fistfuls of a highly inflammable incense powder at the end of an all-night's ceremony of devil dancing. Generally this fire ordeal is horrifying to the onlookers. The Buddha also had to stage a similar fire ordeal in the *Dhammayāga*, or the "Dhamma-sacrifice", he administered to exorcize the malignant personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, ingrained in the minds of worldlings.

Of course there is no explicit reference to such a fire ordeal in the discourses. However, we do come across a word somewhat suggestive of this kind of exorcism. The word *vidhūpeti*, derived from the word *dhūpa*, "incense", is suggestive of "fumigating" or "smoking out". For instance, we find the following verse in the *Bodhivagga* of the *Udāna* with reference to the stages of reflection on the law of dependent arising, in direct and reverse order, that the Buddha had gone through just after his enlightenment.

Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā,

Ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa,

Vidhūpayam tiṭṭhati Mārasenam,

Suriyo 'va obhāsayaṃ antalikkham.³

"When *dhammas* manifest themselves,

To the resolutely meditating Brahmin,

He stands fumigating the hordes of *Māra*,

Like the sun irradiating the firmament."

The dispelling of the hordes of *Māra* is rather suggestive of a smoking out. In some other discourses, this verb *vidhūpeti* is found contrasted with *sandhūpeti*. The meaning of both these verbs, which have the *dhūpa* element in common, is not quite clear. It is likely that the two words imply two functions of the ritual associated with incense. While some fragrant kinds of incense are used for propitiating benevolent spirits, certain caustic types are utilized for exorcising evil spirits.

For instance in the *Khajjanīyasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, with reference to the noble disciple, the phrase *vidhūpeti na sandhūpeti* occurs.⁴ Since the implicit reference is again to the hordes of *Māra*, the phrase could be rendered as "he exorcises and does not propitiate".

The ordinary worldling's mode of recognition of the *Tathāgata* is comparable to the recognition of a vortex that has already ceased with the help of the flotsam and jetsam lightly floating around it. Even after the vortex has ceased, flotsam and jetsam could still go on rotating, giving the wrong impression that the vortex is still there. If one understands that the vortex has actually ceased deep down at its centre, and that what remains there, now, is the great ocean, undifferentiated and unique, one can get rid of the unfounded fear arising from the statement that there is no *Tathāgata* in truth and fact.

The cessation of the puny centre of the whirlpool is equivalent to inheriting an expansive great ocean. It is where a vortex ceases that the great ocean prevails unhindered. To give up the limitations of a vortex, is to inherit the limitless ocean. The irony arising from these statements is already implicit in the term *arahant*. We use this term with reference to the Buddha as well as the *arahants*. Though the commentators later attributed various other meanings to the term, the basic sense is "to be worthy of gifts". In fact, it is being worthy of receiving everything.

It is by giving up all that one becomes worthy of all.

Here too, we have a paradox. To become an *arahant* is to let go of everything. Craving has to be fully abandoned. It is when all desires are gone, when everything is given up, that one becomes worthy of receiving everything. This is the deeper side of the significance of the term *arahant*.

There are six modes of measuring in accordance with the conceit 'am', *asmimāna*. What is known as *saḷāyatana*, or the six sense-bases, comprise the six scales of measurement, asserting the conceit 'am'. At whatever point of time the measuring, evaluating and assessing done by the six sense-bases, such as the eye, ear, nose etc., ceases, the person concerned thereby becomes immeasurable, invaluable and boundless. It is here that the simile of the vortex and the ocean becomes meaningful. So the only way of becoming immeasurable and boundless is to abandon all those scales of measurement. This might sound extremely strange.

With the cessation of a vortex, the attention of one who has been looking at it turns towards the depth, immeasurability and boundlessness of the great ocean. This line of reflection might even enable one to get a glimpse of an unworldly beauty in this philosophy of the void, which drives an unfounded fear into the minds of the worldlings.

We do get positive proof of this fact in such sections of the *Dhammapada* as those entitled The Flowers, The Worthy, The Buddha and The Brahmin, as well as in a number of discourses in the *Sutta Nipāta*, where we come across marvellously scintillating verses. This is understandable, since the dawn of that wisdom which sees the voidness of a self and of everything belonging to a self, and the attainment of the fruits of the path in the light of that wisdom, marks the efflorescence as well as the fruition of the *saṃsāric* existence of a being.

This idea comes up, for instance, in the section on flowers in the *Dhammapada*.

Yathā saṅkārādhānasmim,

Ujjhitasmim mahāpathe,

Padumaṃ tattha jāyetha,

Sucigandhaṃ manoramaṃ.

Evaṃ saṅkārabhūtesu,

andhabhūte puthujjane,

atirocati paññāya,

*sammāsambuddhasāvako.*⁵

"As on top of a rubbish heap,

Dumped by the highway side,

There blossoms forth a lotus,

Pure in fragrance and charming.

So amidst the worldlings blind,

The Fully Awakened One's disciple,

Outshines them in marked contrast,

In point of wisdom bright."

So, then, the *arahant* is that charming lotus, arising out of the cesspool of *saṃsāra*. Surely there cannot be anything frightful about it. There is nothing to get scared about this prospect.

In our last sermon we quoted from a discourse that gives some new definitions and new concepts of the world.⁶ We brought up two statements from the *Lokakāmaguṇasutta* (No. 1) of the *Salāyatanavagga* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. The first statement is somewhat riddle-like. There the Buddha addresses the monks and declares:

*Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, gamanena lokassa antaṃ nātayyaṃ, daṭṭhayaṃ, pattayyaṃ'ti vadāmi. Na ca panāhaṃ, bhikkhave, appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ vadāmi.*⁷

"Monks, I do not say that by travelling one can come to know or see or reach the end of the world. Nor do I say that without reaching the end of the world one can put an end to suffering."

We also mentioned, the other day, the explanation given by Venerable Ānanda to this cryptic statement at the request of those monks who approached him to get it clarified. That explanation embodies the definition given by the Buddha to the term world. It is not the common concept of the world.

Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko. Kena c'āvuso lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī?

Cakkhunā kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, sotena ... ghānena ... jīvhāya ... kāyena ... mānena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī. Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko.

"Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and has a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the Noble Ones is called 'the world'. By what, friends, has one a perception of the world and a conceit of the world?"

By the eye, friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, by the ear ... by the nose ... by the tongue ... by the body ... by the mind ... That, friends, by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the Noble Ones is called 'the world'."

That with which the world is measured, that itself is called 'the world'. The above-mentioned measuring rods, namely the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, give us a conceit of the world and a perception of the world. Apart from these six there is no way of knowing a world. All theories about the world are founded on these six sense-bases.

By way of a simple illustration, we alluded to the fact that in the absence of any standard measuring rod, we resort to the primordial scales based on this physical frame of ours, such as the inch, the span, the foot and the fathom. The subtlest scale of measurement, however, is that based on the mind. It is in this mode of measuring and reckoning that concepts

and designations play their part. But the Buddha's philosophy of the void goes against all these mental modes. His exorcism by the vision of the void fumigates all concepts and designations.

The six sense-bases are therefore so many scales of measurement. It is with the help of these that the world is measured. So the above definition of the world brings out the "prepared", *saṅkhata*, nature of the world. It is a thought-construct.

This does not amount to a negation of the role of materiality. All we mean to say is that the concept of the world is actually an outcome of these six sense bases. To that extent it is something prepared, a thought-construct.

While discussing the ten indeterminate points on a previous occasion, we happened to mention that the first four among them concern the world.⁸

1. "The world is eternal".
2. "The world is not eternal".
3. "The world is finite".
4. "The world is infinite".

What those theorists meant by the term world in this context is none other than that prepared world which is constructed by the six sense-bases. That is to say, it is just the concept of the world.

However, they were not aware of the fact that their concept of the world is a thought-construct, because they had no insight into the law of dependent arising. They did not understand that these are mere preparations. The fallacy involved here, that is, the inability to understand that their concept of the world is the outcome of wrong attention, we illustrated by the simile of the magic kettle.

In an exhibition a magic kettle is displayed from which water keeps on flowing into a basin. One curious onlooker is waiting to see the kettle empty, while the other is waiting to see the basin overflowing. Both are unaware of the fact that a hidden tube conveys the water back again to the kettle, unseen through the same flow of water.

The ordinary concept of the world carries with it the same fallacy. The worldlings under the sway of defilements, which thrive on the perception of the compact, *ghanasaññā*, have the habit of grasping everything. The

ordinary man of the world, fully overcome by craving and grasping, entertains a perception of permanence since he has no insight. That is why he regards the world as a unit due to his perception of the compact, as he takes cognizance only of the arising aspect, ignoring the decaying aspect.

Whether such a world is eternal or not, is the point at issue in the case of the first set of questions mentioned above, while the next set poses the dilemma whether it is finite or infinite. What is at the root of all those ill-conceived notions, is the premise that it is possible to posit an absolute existence or an absolute non-existence. In other words, the two extreme views 'everything exists' and 'nothing exists'.

The unique norm of dependent arising, which the Buddha discovered, dismisses both those extreme views. It is set forth in the *Kaccāya-nagottasutta* of the *Nidānaśamyutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which we have quoted earlier too.⁹ We shall, however, bring up again the relevant section to elucidate this point.

*Dvayanissito khvāyaṃ, Kaccāyana, loko yebhuyyena: atthitañceva natthitañca. Lokasamudayaṃ kho, Kaccāyana, yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loka natthitā sā na hoti. Lokanirodhaṃ kho, Kaccāyana, yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loka atthitā sā na hoti.*¹⁰

"This world, *Kaccāyana*, for the most part, bases its views on two things: on existence and non-existence. Now, *Kaccāyana*, to one who with right wisdom sees the arising of the world as it is, the view of non-existence regarding the world does not occur. And to one who with right wisdom sees the cessation of the world as it really is, the view of existence regarding the world does not occur."

This is where our simile of the magic kettle becomes meaningful. Had both onlookers understood that the magic kettle is getting filled at the same time it gets emptied, and that the basin also gets filled while it is being emptied, they would not have the curiosity to go on looking at it.

In contradistinction to both these viewpoints, the law of dependent arising promulgated by the Buddha transcends them by penetrating into the concept as such. The Buddha explained the arising of the world in terms of the twelve factors, beginning with "dependent on ignorance preparations", precisely because it cannot be presented in one word.

Usually, the formula of dependent arising is summed up with the words

ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo, "this is the arising of suffering", or with the more conclusive statement *evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*, "thus is the arising of this entire mass of suffering".

There are also instances of explaining the arising of the world through the principle underlying the norm of dependent arising. The world arises in the six sense-bases. It is at the same time the arising of suffering. The arising of suffering is almost synonymous with the arising of the world.

The law of dependent arising is an explanation of the way a concept of the world comes about. This is an extremely subtle point. Since the concept of the world is a product of wrong reflection, it is *saṅkhata*, or "prepared". It is like something imagined. The *saṅkhata*, or the "prepared", has a certain circularity about it.

In fact, the two dilemmas mentioned above involve the question of time and space. The question whether the world is eternal or not eternal concerns time, whereas the question whether the world is finite or infinite relates to space. Both time and space involve a circularity. The furthest limit of the forenoon is the nearest limit of the afternoon, and the furthest limit of the afternoon is the nearest limit of the forenoon. This is how the cycle of the day turns round. Where the forenoon ends is the afternoon, where the afternoon ends is the forenoon.

A similar time cycle is to be found even in one moment. Rise and fall occur as a cycle even within a single moment. The same process goes on within an aeon. That is why an aeon is said to have the two aspects called *samvatta*, "contraction", and *vivaṭṭa*, "expansion". World systems go on contracting and expanding.

The so-called existence of the world is a continuous process of contraction and expansion. Therefore it is impossible to find any beginning or end. The very question of a first beginning is ill conceived. It is like an attempt to find a starting point in a cycle. It is a problem that cannot be solved by speculation.

Because of the cyclic nature of existence, rise and fall is characteristic of every single moment. It is by ignoring the decaying aspect inherent in one moment that wrong reflection gives rise to the inference that there must be an absolute end of the world.

Because the visible world gets destroyed, one conceives of an absolute end of the world. But when one world system gets destroyed, another

world system gets crystallized somewhere else. Speculative views and standpoints about the universe, current among the worldlings, are of such a misleading nature that any reasoning based on them leads to a circularity of argument as is evident from the *Lokāyatikābrāhmaṇāsutta* among the Nines of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.

This discourse is about two *Lokāyatikābrāhmīns*. The term *Lokāyatika* is a derivative from *lokāyata*, which signifies a branch of knowledge dealing with the length and breadth of the world, perhaps a prototype of modern science, though it relied more on logic than on experiment. The two Brahmins were probably students of such a branch of learning. One day they came to the Buddha and posed this question:

"Sire Gotama, now there is this teacher *Pūraṇa Kassapa* who claims omniscience, saying that he sees everything and has knowledge and vision of everything while walking or standing, whether asleep or awake. With these claims to omniscience, he makes the following declaration:"

Ahaṃ anantena ñāṇena anantaṃ lokaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ viharāmi." "I dwell knowing and seeing an infinite world with an infinite knowledge."

"But then there is this teacher *Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta* who also has similar claims to omniscience, but declares: *Ahaṃ antavantena ñāṇena antavantaṃ lokaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ viharāmi.*" "I dwell knowing and seeing a finite world with a finite knowledge."

Then the two Brahmins ask the Buddha which of these two teachers claiming omniscience in such contradictory terms is correct. But the Buddha's reply was: *Alaṃ brāhmaṇā, tiṭṭhat' etaṃ ... Dhammaṃ vo desissāmi,* "enough, brahmīns, let that question be ... I shall preach to you the *Dhamma*."

The expression used here is suggestive of the fact that the question belongs to the category of unexplained points. Terms like *ṭhapita*, "left aside", and *ṭhapanīya*, "should be left aside", are used with reference to indeterminate points.

Why did the Buddha leave the question aside? We can guess the reason, though it is not stated as such. Now the standpoint of *Pūraṇa Kassapa* is: "I dwell knowing and seeing an infinite world with an infinite knowledge." One can question the validity of his claim with the objection: You see an infinite world, because your knowledge is not finite, that is to say, incomplete. If it is complete, there must be an end. Therefore, going

by the sense of incompleteness in the word *anantaṃ*, one can refute the former view. Why you see the world as infinite is because your knowledge lacks finality.

Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta, on the other hand, is asserting that he sees a finite world with a finite knowledge. But the followers of *Pūraṇa Kassapa* can raise the objection: you are seeing the world as finite because your knowledge is limited. Your knowledge has an end, that is why you see a finite world. So here, too, we have a circle, or rather a circularity of argument. The two terms *anta* and *ananata* are ambiguous. That must be the reason why the Buddha rejected the two standpoints in question.

Then he declares: "I shall preach to you the *Dhamma*", and brings up as a simile an illustration which could be summed up as follows. Four persons endowed with the highest ability to walk, the highest speed and the widest stride possible, stand in the four directions. Their speed is that of an arrow and their stride is as wide as the distance between the eastern ocean and the western ocean. Each of them tells himself: 'I will reach the end of the world by walking' and goes on walking for hundred years, that being his full life-span, resting just for eating, drinking, defecating, urinating and giving way to sleep or fatigue, only to die on the way without reaching the end of the world.

'But why so?', asks the Buddha rhetorically and gives the following explanation. "I do not say, O! Brahmins, that the end of the world can be known, seen or reached by this sort of running. Nor do I say that there is an ending of suffering without reaching the end of the world." Then he declares: "Brahmins, it is these five strands of sense pleasures that in the Noble One's discipline are called 'the world'".

In this particular context, the Buddha calls these five kinds of sense-pleasures 'the world' according to the Noble One's terminology. This does not contradict the earlier definition of the world in terms of the six sense-bases, for it is by means of these six sense-bases that one enjoys the five strands of sense-pleasures. However, as an art of preaching, the Buddha defines the world in terms of the five strands of sense-pleasures in this context.

Then he goes on to proclaim the way of transcending this world of the five sense pleasures in terms of *jhānic* attainments. When one attains to the first *jhāna*, one is already far removed from that world of the five sense-pleasures. But about him, the Buddha makes the following

pronouncement:

Aham pi, brāhmaṇā, evaṃ vadāmi: 'ayam pi lokapariyāpanno, ayam pi anissaṣo lokamhā'ti, "and I too, O! Brahmins, say this: 'This one, too, is included in the world, this one, too, has not stepped out of the world'". The Buddha makes the same pronouncement with regard to those who attain to the other *jhānic* levels. But finally he comes to the last step with these words:

Puna ca paraü, brāhmaõà, bhikkhu sabbaso
nevasaṃṇàṇasaṃṇàya-tanaü samatikkama
saṃṇavedayitanirodhaü upasampajja viharati, paṃṇaya c'
assa disvā àsavā parikkhãõà honti. Ayaü vuccati,
brāhmaõà, bhikkhu lokassa antam àgamma lokassa ante
viharati tiõõo loke visattikaü.

"But then, O! Brahmins, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, attains to and abides in the cessation of perceptions and feelings, and in him, having seen with wisdom, the influxes are made extinct. This one, O! Brahmins, is known as one who, on reaching the end of the world, is dwelling at its very end, having crossed over the agglutinative craving".

Going by these discourses, one might conclude that the cessation of perceptions and feelings is actually *Nibbāna* itself. But the most important part of the above quotation is the statement *paññāya c' assa disvā àsavā parikkhñā honti*, "having seen with wisdom, the influxes are made extinct in him". While in the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, all preparations subside and it is on rising from it that all influxes are made extinct by the vision of wisdom.

This fact comes to light in the following answer of Venerable *Dhammadiṇṇā Therī* to the question raised by the lay-follower *Visākha*, her former husband, in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*.

*Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitaṃ, kho āvuso Visākha, bhikkhuṃ tayo phassā phusanti: suññato phasso, animitta phasso, appaṇihito phasso.*¹² "Friend Visākha, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, three kinds of contact touch him: voidness contact, signless contact, desireless contact."

On this point, the commentary too, gives the explanation *suññatā*

nāma phalasarāpatti,¹³ "'voidness' means the attainment of the fruit of arahant-hood".

In answer to another question, Venerable *Dhammadīṇṇā Therī* says, *Saññāvedayitanirodhasarāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa, kho āvuso Visākhā, bhikkhuno vivekaninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti vivekaṇaṃ vivekapabbhāraṃ*, "Friend Visākhā, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, his mind inclines to seclusion, slants to seclusion, tends to seclusion".

Here the commentary explains *nibbānaṃ viveka nāma*, "what is called seclusion is *Nibbāna*".

So it is on emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, that is in the *arahattaphalasarāpatti*, references to which we have cited earlier,¹⁴ that *Nibbāna* is realized. It is then that one actually sees the end of the world.

So from this we can well infer that in advancing a new definition of the world, in introducing a new concept of the world, the Buddha was not trying to sidetrack the moot point of the worldlings by bringing in something totally irrelevant. He was simply rejecting for some sound reason the worldlings' concept of the world, which is born of wrong reflection, and illustrating the correct measuring rod, the true criterion of judgement regarding the origin of the concept of the world according to radical reflection.

Out of all the discourses dealing with the question of the end of the world and the end of suffering, perhaps the most significant is the *Rohitassa Sutta*, which is found in the *Sagāthakasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, as well as in the section of the Fours in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Once when the Buddha was staying at the *Jetavana* monastery at *Sāvathī*, a deity named *Rohitassa* visited him in the night and asked the following question: "Where Lord one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, is one able, Lord, by travelling to come to know that end of the world or to see it or to get there?"

The Buddha replies: "Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at."

When the Buddha gave this brief answer, the deity *Rohitassa* praised him with the following words of approbation: *Acchariyaṃ bhante, abbhutaṃ bhante, yāva subhāsitaṃ idaṃ bhagavatā*,¹⁵ "it is wonderful,

Lord, it is marvellous, Lord, how well it is said by the Exalted One."

Why did he express his approbation? Because he had already realized the truth of the Buddha's statement by his own experience. Then he goes on to relate the whole story of his past life.

"In times past, Lord, I was a seer, *Rohitassa* by name, son of *Bhoja*, gifted so that I could fly through the air, and so swift, Lord, was my speed that I could fly just as quickly as a master of archery, well-trained, expert, proficient, a past master in his art, armed with a strong bow, could without difficulty send a light arrow far past the area coloured by a palm tree's shadow; and so great, Lord, was my stride that I could step from the eastern to the western ocean. In me, Lord, arose such a wish as this: 'I will arrive at the end of the world by walking'. And though such, Lord, was my speed and such my stride, and though with a life span of a century, living for a hundred years, I walked continuously for hundred years, except for the times spent in eating, drinking, chewing or tasting, or in answering calls of nature, and the time I gave to way to sleep or fatigue, yet I died on the way, without reaching the end of the world. Wonderful is it, O! Lord, marvellous is it, Lord, how well it is said by the Exalted One:

Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at."

It is at this point, that the Buddha comes out with a momentous declaration, while granting *Rohitassa's* approbation.

Yattha kho, āvuso, na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na cavati na upapajjati, nāhaṃ taṃ 'gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñāteyyaṃ daṭṭheyyaṃ patteyyaṃ'ti vadāmi. Na cāhaṃ, āvuso, appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassantakiriyaṃ vadāmi. Api c'āhaṃ, āvuso, imasmiṃ yeva byāmamatte kaḷevare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca paṭipadaṃ.

"Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at. But neither do I say, friend, that without having reached the end of the world there could be an ending of suffering. It is in this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind, that I declare lies the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

This momentous declaration, which is comparable to a fearless lion's roar that puts all religious and philosophical systems to flight, has been misinterpreted by some who have not grasped its true significance. They say that according to this discourse the cessation of the world is not here and that only the other three are to be found in this fathom-long body.

Such misinterpretations are the result of taking seriously various far-fetched speculations of later origin about *Nibbāna*. According to them, *Nibbāna* is some mysterious non-descript place of rest for the *arahants* after their demise. One who goes by that kind of speculation is not ready to accept the Buddha's declaration that it is in this very fathom-long body with its perceptions and mind that a cessation of the world can be realized.

The commentary in this context simply observes that the four noble truths are to be found not in grass and twigs outside, but in this body consisting of the four elements.¹⁶ It has nothing more to add. A certain modern scholar has rightly pointed out that the commentator has missed a great opportunity for exegesis.¹⁷ The reason for the commentator's lack of interest, in the case of such a discourse of paramount importance, is probably his predilection for these later speculations on *Nibbāna*.

All what we have so far stated in explaining the significance of discourses dealing with the subject of *Nibbāna*, could even be treated as a fitting commentary to the *Rohitassasutta*.

The point of relevance is the couple of words *sasaññimhi samanake*, occurring in the discourse in question. This fathom-long physical frame is here associated with perceptions and mind. The expression used by the Buddha in this context is full of significance.

As we saw above, Venerable *Ānanda* defines the term 'world' as follows: *yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko*. "Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and has a conceit of the world that in the discipline of the Noble Ones is called 'the world'." The conceit of the world is a form of measuring with the mind. So the two words *sasaññimhi samanake* are suggestive of the concept of the world in the Noble Ones' discipline.

While discussing the significance of *arahattaphalasamāpatti*, also known as *aññāphalasamādhī*, and *aññāvimokkha*, we had occasion to bring up such quotations as the following:

Siyā nu kho, bhante, bhikkhuno tathārūpo samādhipaṭilābho yathā

*neva paṭhaviyaṃ paṭhavisaññī assa, na āpasmim āposaññī assa, na tejasmim tejosaññī assa, na vāyasmim vāyosaññī assa, na ākāsānañcāyatane ākāsānañcāyatanasaññī assa, na viññānañcāyatane viññānancāyatanasaññī assa, na ākiñcaññāyatane ākiñcaññāyatanasaññī assa, na nevasaññānāsaññāyatane nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasaññī assa, na idhaloke idhalokasaññī assa, na paraloke paralokasaññī assa, yam p'idaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutam mutam viññātam pattam pariyesitam anuvicaritam manasā tatrāpi na saññī assa, saññī ca pana assa?*¹⁸

"Could there be, Lord, for a monk such an attainment of concentration wherein he will not be conscious (literally: 'percipient') of earth in earth, nor of water in water, nor of fire in fire, nor of air in air, nor will he be conscious of the sphere of infinite space in the sphere of infinite space, nor of the sphere of infinite consciousness in the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor of the sphere of nothingness in the sphere of nothingness, nor of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, nor will he be conscious of a this world in this world, nor of a world beyond in a world beyond, whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, traversed by the mind, even of that he will not be conscious - and yet he will be conscious?"

The *arahattaphalasamādhī* is so extraordinary that while in it one has no perception of earth, water, fire and air, or of this world, or of the other world, of whatever is seen, heard, sensed and cognized, but one is all the same percipient or conscious, *saññī ca pana assa*.

To the question: 'Of what is he percipient?', *kiṃ saññī?*, once Venerable *Sāriputta* gave the answer that the perception is of *Nibbāna* as the cessation of existence, *bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ*.¹⁹

In another discourse that we happened to quote, the mode of questioning has the following sequence: "Could there be, Lord, for a monk such an attainment of concentration wherein he will not be attending to the eye, nor to form, nor to the ear, nor to sound" etc., but ends with the riddle like phrase "and yet he will be attending", *manasi ca pana kareyya*.²⁰

When the Buddha grants the possibility of such a concentration, Venerable *Ānanda* rejoins with an inquisitive "how could there be, Lord?", and the Buddha explains that what a monk attends to while in that attainment could be summed up in the stereotyped phrase:

Etaṃ santam, etaṃ pañitam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho

sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ, "this is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction."

It is *Nibbāna*, then, that one attends to while in that attainment. So we find even the terms "perception", *saññā*, and "attention", *manasikāra*, being used in the context of *arahattaphalasamāpatti*, or "attainment to the fruit of arahant-hood".

Therefore, *Nibbāna* is not an experience as dry as a log of wood, but a state of serene awareness of its true significance. It is a transcendence of the world by realization of its cessation. That is why the two words *sasaññimhi samanake*, "with its perceptions and mind", have been used to qualify, *kaḷevare*, "physical frame", or "body", in the momentous declaration.

We also came across some instances in the discourses where the Buddha calls the cessation of the six sense-spheres itself *Nibbāna*. The most notable instance is perhaps the *Kāmaguṇasutta* we had already quoted.²¹ As we saw, even its presentation is rather enigmatic. It runs.

*Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati rūpasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha ghāṇañca nirujjhati gandhasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha jivhā ca nirujjhati rasasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha kāyo ca nirujjhati phoṭṭabbasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha mano ca nirujjhati dhammasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe.*²²

"Therefore, monks, that sphere should be known wherein the eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away, the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away, the nose ceases and the perception of smells fades away, the tongue ceases and the perception of tastes fades away, the body ceases and the perception of tangibles fades away, the mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away, that sphere should be known."

Venerable *Ānanda*, commenting on this riddle-like sermon of the Buddha, concludes that the Buddha is here referring to the cessation of the six sense-spheres, *saḷāyatananirodhaṃ, āvuso, Bhagavatā sandhāya bhā-sitaṃ*. "Friends, it is with reference to the cessation of the six sense-spheres that the Exalted One has preached this sermon." The cessation of

the six sense-spheres is *Nibbāna*.

All this goes to show that the concept of a world is the product of the six sense-spheres. Those six measuring rods have measured out a world for us.

Since the world is built up by the six sense-spheres, it has also to cease by the cessation of those six sense-spheres. That is why *Nibbāna* is defined as the cessation of the six sense-spheres, *saḷāyatanañirodho Nibbānaṃ*. All those measuring rods and scales lose their applicability with the cessation of the six sense-spheres.

How can there be an experience of cessation of the six sense-spheres? The cessation here meant is actually the cessation of the spheres of contact. A sphere of contact presupposes a duality. Contact is always between two things, between eye and forms, for instance. It is because of a contact between two things that one entertains a perception of permanence in those two things. Dependent on that contact, feelings and perceptions arise, creating a visual world. The visual world of the humans differs from that of animals. Some things that are visible to animals are not visible to humans. That is due to the constitution of the eye-faculty. It is the same with regard to the ear-faculty. These are the measuring rods and scales which build up a world.

Now this world, which is a product of the spheres of sense-contact, is a world of *papañca*, or "proliferation". *Nibbāna* is called *nippapañca* because it transcends this proliferation, puts an end to proliferation. The end of proliferation is at the same time the end of the six sense-spheres.

There is a discourse in the section of the Fours in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* which clearly brings out this fact. There we find Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* putting a question to Venerable *Sāriputta* on this point. Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* and Venerable *Sāriputta* are often found discussing intricate points in the *Dhamma*, not because they are in doubt, but in order to clarify matters for us. They are thrashing out problems for our sake. In this particular instance, Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* puts the following question to Venerable *Sāriputta*:

*Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgañirodhā atth'aññaṃ kiñci?*²³ "Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is there something left?"

Venerable *Sāriputta*'s response was: *Mā hevaṃ āvuso*, "do not say so, friend." Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* follows it up with three other possible

alternatives, all of which Venerable *Sāriputta* dismisses with the same curt reply. The three alternatives are:

Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā natth' aññaṃ kiñci? "Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is there nothing left?"

Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā atthi ca natthi ca aññaṃ kiñci? "Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is it the case that there is and is not something left?"

Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā nev'atthi no natth' aññaṃ kiñci? "Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is it the case that there neither is nor is not something left?"

The mode of questioning takes the form of a tetralemma and Venerable *Sāriputta* dismisses all the four alternatives as inapplicable. Then Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* asks why all these four questions were ruled out, and Venerable *Sāriputta* explains:

'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā atth' aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti. 'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā natth' aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti. 'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā atthi ca natthi ca aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti. 'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā nev'atthi no natth' aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti.

Yāvatā, āvuso, channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ gati tāvatā papañcassa gati, yāvatā papañcassa gati tāvatā channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ gati. Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā papañcanirodho papañcavūpasamo.

"Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there is something left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually. Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there is nothing left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually. Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there is and is not something left' is conceptually

proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually. Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there neither is nor is not something left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually.

Friend, whatever is the range of the six spheres of sense-contact, that itself is the range of conceptual proliferation, and whatever is the range of conceptual proliferation, that itself is the range of the six spheres of sense-contact. By the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there comes to be the cessation and appeasement of conceptual proliferation."

The commentator gives the following explanation to the expression *atth' aññaṃ kiñci*, "is there something left?": '*tato paraṃ koci appamattako pi kilesa atthī'ti pucchati*'.²⁴ According to him, Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* is asking whether there is even a little defilement left after the cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact. But the question is obviously not about the remaining defilements, in which case even a categorical negative could have been the correct answer. The question here is about the very usage of the expressions 'is' and 'is not'.

With the cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact all four propositions of the tetralemma, based on the two standpoints 'is' and 'is not', lose their applicability. They are rejected in toto. Here the *papañca*, or "conceptual proliferation", implied, is the very discrimination between 'is' and 'is not'.

The entire world is built up on the two concepts 'is' and 'is not'. Being unaware of the *saṅkhata*, or "prepared", nature of these concepts, we are accustomed to say 'this is' as occasion demands. This recording machine before us 'is there'. So also are the things which we presume to exist. We ourselves do exist, do we not? One could say 'I am'.

Out of the two rapid processes going on within us every moment, namely arising and passing away, we are most of the time dwelling on the side of arising. The two concepts 'is' and 'is not' are structured on the six spheres of sense-contact. Not only 'is' and 'is not', but also the entire logical structure connecting these two postulates is founded on these six spheres. Here, then, we see the fistfuls of inflammable incense powder the Buddha had directed towards language and logic, setting all that ablaze.

What this discourse highlights is the fact that by the very cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact the cessation of conceptual proliferation

is brought about. With reference to speculative views, particularly to those wrong views that were put aside as unexplained points, the Buddha uses the term *diṭṭhipariḷāha*, "delirium of views".²⁵ *Pariḷāha* means "delirious fever".

Patients in delirium cry out for water. The worldlings, in general, are in high delirium. Even such teachers like *Pūraṇa Kassapa* and *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*, who were trying to solve these speculative problems about the world by logic, were also in delirium. Their views, based on wrong reflections, were mere hallucinations. They kept on raising such questions, because they had no insight into the nature of *saṅkhāras*, or "preparations".

The worldlings spend their whole lifetime running in search of the world's end. All that is *papañca*, conceptual proliferation. In fact, the term *papañca* is so pervasive in its gamut of meaning that it encompasses the entire world. Usually, the term is glossed over by explaining it with reference to *taṇhā*, *māna* and *diṭṭhi*, bringing in craving, conceits and views as illustrations of *papañca*. But that does not amount to an explanation proper. It is only a definition in extension by giving three instances of *papañca*. To rattle off the three instances is not a fit answer to the question 'what is *papañca*'.

The primary significance of *papañca* is traceable to the linguistic medium. We have already shown how the network of grammar spreads as soon as the peg 'am' is driven down to earth, as it were.²⁶ The reality in the first person in grammar beckons a second and a third person to complete the picture. In logic, too, a similar legerdemain takes place. The interminable questions of identity and difference lead the logician up the garden path.

The 'world' is precariously perched on a fictitious network of grammar and logic.

It is as a solution to all this that the Buddha came out with the extraordinary prospect of a cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact. This, then, is a level of experience realizable here and now. That is why the Buddha declared that the world is in this very fathom-long body with its perceptions and mind.

Now as to the questions about the world, we have already pointed out that there is a circularity involved. Though one cannot find an end in

something of a cyclic nature, there is still a solution possible. There is only one solution, that is, to break the cycle. That is what the term *vaṭṭupaccheda* means. One can breach the cycle. The cycle cannot be discovered by travelling. It is not out there, but in this very stream of consciousness within us. We have already described it as the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form. An allusion to the breach of the vortex is found in the following verse, which we have already discussed in connection with *Nibbāna*.

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

*Ettha dīghañca rassañca,
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,
ettha nāmañca rūpañca,
asesaṃ uparujjhati,
viññāṇassa nirodhena,
etth'etaṃ uparujjhati.²⁷*

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

Here one can see how name-and-form are cut off. *Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ*, "consciousness, which is non-manifestative, infinite and lustrous on all sides". In this consciousness even the four great primaries earth, water, fire and air, do not find a footing. *Cakkavāla*, or a world-system, is supposed to be made up of these four primary elements. Even the term *cakkavāla* implies something

cyclic. The world is a product of these primary elements, but these are not there in that non-manifestative consciousness.

Such relative distinctions as long and short, subtle and gross, have no place in it. Name-and-form cease there, leaving no residue. Like an expert physician, who treats the germ of a disease and immunizes the patient, the Buddha effected a breach in the *saṃsāric* vortex by concentrating on its epicycle within this fathom-long body.

The ever recurrent process of mutual interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form forming the epicycle of the *saṃsāric* vortex was breached. With the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of consciousness. That is the dictum of the *Naḷakalāpīsutta*.²⁸ Out of the two bundles of reeds left standing, supporting each other, when one is drawn the other falls down. Even so, with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of consciousness. That is how the Buddha solved this problem.

1. MI436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
2. S I 14, *Arahantasutta*, see sermon 13.
3. Ud 3, *Bodhivagga*.
4. S III 89, *Khajjanīyasutta*.
5. Dh 58-59, *Pupphavagga*.
6. See sermon 22.
7. S IV 93, *Lokakāmaguṇasutta*.
8. See sermon 20.
9. See sermons 4 and 22.
10. S II 17, *Kaccāyanagottasutta*.
11. A IV 428, *Lokāyatikābrāhmaṇāsutta*.
12. MI 302, *Cūḷavedallasutta*.
13. Ps II 367.
14. See sermons 16 and 17.
15. S I 61 and A II 49 *Rohitassasutta*.
16. Spk I 118 and Mp III 89.
17. Mrs. Rhys Davids: *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, PTS 1979, p 86 n 3.
18. A V 318, *Saññāsutta*, see also sermon 16.
19. A V 9, *Sāriputtasutta*, see also sermon 17.
20. A V 321, *Manasikārasutta*, see also sermon 16
21. See sermon 17.
22. S IV 98, *Kāmaguṇasutta*.
23. A II 161, *Mahākoṭṭhitasutta*.
24. Mp III 150.
25. A II 11, *Yogasutta*.
26. See sermons 13 and 15.
27. DI 223, *Kevaḍḍhasutta*, see also sermon 6.
28. S II 114, *Naḷakalāpīsutta*, see also sermon 3.

Sermon - 24

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

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*¹

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

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the twenty-fourth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*. In our last sermon, we brought up a quotation from the *Rohitassa Sutta*, which enshrines a momentous declaration by the Buddha to the effect that the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world, could be pointed out with reference to this same body with its perceptions and mind.²

The six sense-spheres, or the six bases of sense-contact, with which we acquaint ourselves with the world as it is conventionally understood and measured out, are themselves called 'the world' according to the Noble One's terminology.³ Therefore, one can declare in accordance with the *Dhamma*, that the very cessation of those six sense-spheres is the cessation of the world. It is this state of the cessation of the world that is known as *asaṅkhata dhātu*, or the "unprepared element". That unprepared state, described in discourses on *Nibbāna* in such terms as *atthi, bhikkhave, ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkataṃ*,⁴ "monks, there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an unprepared", is this cessation of the six spheres of sense, which is the end of that prepared world.

So, then, this particular world's end, the end of the world as defined here, is not a destination to be reached by travelling. The sage *Rohitassa* walked for hundred years in search of this world's end at a speed of a flying arrow, but he failed to discover the world's end. Why? It is because he took 'the world' along with him in his journey to see its end. Since this six-based body with its perceptions and mind is itself the world, he was taking the world with him in his exploration. That is why he had to die on the way without seeing the end of the world.

That end of the world, which one cannot see or reach by travelling, the Buddha pointed out in the very cessation of the six sense-spheres. This fact comes to light in the discourses dealing with *Nibbāna* in the *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga* of the *Udāna*, which we had already discussed.⁵ For instance, in the first discourse on *Nibbāna*, beginning with the words *atthi, bhikkhave, tad āyatanam*, "there is, monks, that sphere", we find towards the end the following statement:

*Tatra p'ahaṃ, bhikkhave, n'eva āgatiṃ vadāmi na gatiṃ na thitiṃ na cutiṃ na upapattiṃ, appatiṭṭham appavattiṃ anārammaṇam eva taṃ, es' ev' anto dukkhassa.*⁶

In that particular state, described as a 'sphere', in which there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, etc., "I say, there is neither a coming, nor a going, nor a standing, nor a passing away, nor a being reborn; that state which is unestablished, non continuing and objectless, is itself the end of suffering." So, then, this journey's end, the journey's end that cannot be reached by journeying, the Buddha pointed out in the cessation of the six sense-spheres.

We come across the following passage in the fourth discourse on *Nibbāna* in the *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga* of the *Udāna*:

*Nissitassa calitaṃ, anissitassa calitaṃ n' atthi, calite asati passaddhi, passaddhiyā sati nati no hoti, natiyā asati āgatigati na hoti, āgatigatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti, cutūpapāte asati n' ev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantare, es' ev' anto dukkhassa.*⁷

"To the attached there is wavering, to the unattached there is no wavering; wavering not being, there is calm; calm being, there is no inclination; inclination not being, there is no coming and going; coming and going not being, there is no passing away or reappearing; when there is no passing away or reappearing, there is neither a 'here', nor a 'there', nor anything between the two - this is the end of suffering."

It is in such profound terms, that the Buddha described the end of the world. One cannot see it by journeying. It can be seen only by wisdom. In fact, even the very concept of 'going' has to be transcended in order to see it.

So, it seems, *Rohitassa* carried the world with him in his journey to see the end of the world. He made another blunder. He was going in search of

a place where there is no death, in order to escape death. Even that, the Buddha had declared, is not possible to see or reach by travelling.

Rohitassa took *Māra* along with him in his journey to find a place where there is no death. Why do we say so? In the *Rādhasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* we find Venerable *Rādha* putting the following question to the Buddha:

‘*Māro, māro ’ti, bhante, vuccati, kittāvātā nu kho, bhante, ’māro ’ti vuccati?*’⁸ *Māra, Māra*, they say, venerable sir, to what extent is *Māra* called as such?”

Now this is how the Buddha answers the question:

Rūpe kho, Rādha, sati Māro vā assa māretā vā yo vā pana mīyati. Tasmātiha tvaṃ, Rādha, rūpaṃ ’Māro ’ti passa, ’māretā ’ti passa, ’mīyati’ ti passa, ’rogo ’ti passa, ’gaṇḍo ’ti passa, ’sallan’ ti passa, ’aghan’ ti passa, ’aghabhūtan’ ti passa. Ye nam evaṃ passanti te sammā passanti.

"Where there is form, *Rādha*, there would be a *Māra*, or one who kills, or one who dies. Therefore, *Rādha*, in this context you look upon form as ‘*Māra*’, as ‘one who kills’, as ‘one who dies’, as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as a misery, as a wretchedness. They that look upon thus are those that see rightly."

As in the case of form, so also in regard to feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness, the same mode of seeing rightly is recommended. So, in this context, each of the five aggregates is looked upon as a *Māra*, from the point of view of the *Dhamma*. That is why we say that *Rohitassa* went in search of a deathless place taking death along with him.

From this definition it is clear that so long as one grasps with craving the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness, there is a *Māra*, a killer, and one who dies. Therefore it is, that by giving up the five aggregates one is freed from *Māra*, is liberated from death and attains the deathless state. That is why we said that the *arahant* has attained the deathless state, here and now, in this world itself.⁹ The principle involved here we have already stated while discussing the law of dependent arising.¹⁰

Let us remind ourselves of the relevant section of a verse in the *Bhadrāvudhamānavappucchā* of the *Pārāyanavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*:

*Yaṃ yaṃ hi lokasmiṃ upādiyanti,
ten' eva Māra anveti jantum.*¹¹

"Whatever thing they grasp in this world,
By that itself *Māra* pursues a man."

Because of grasping, there is becoming or existence and with it birth, decay and death, etc., follow suit, all due to craving. That is the deep idea behind the Buddha's definition of the five grasping groups in terms of *Māra*.

In fact, these six sense-spheres, the six bases, are within the jurisdiction of *Māra*. This is evident from *Māra*'s own words in the *Kas-sakasutta* of the *Sagāthakavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*.

Once, when the Buddha was admonishing the monks with a sermon on *Nibbāna*, it occurred to *Māra*, the Evil One: "Now this recluse Gotama is admonishing the monks and the monks are listening attentively. I must go and blind their eye of wisdom." With this evil intention, he came there in the guise of a farmer, carrying a plough on his shoulder, a goad in his hand, with dishevelled hair and muddy feet, and asked the Buddha: "Recluse, did you see my oxen?" Then the Buddha retorted: "What is the use of oxen for you, Evil One?" *Māra* understood that the Buddha had recognized him and came out with the following boast of his superiority:

*Mam eva, samaṇa, cakkhu, mama rūpā, mama cakkhusamphas-saviññānāyatanaṃ, kuhiṃ me, samaṇa, gantvā mokkhasi?*¹²

Mam eva, samaṇa, sotaṃ ... Mam eva, samaṇa, ghānaṃ ... Mam eva, samaṇa, jivhā ... Mam eva, samaṇa, kāyo ...

Mam eva, samaṇa, mano, mama dhammā, mama manosamphas-saviññānāyatanaṃ, kuhiṃ me, samaṇa, gantvā mokkhasi?

"Mine, O recluse, is the eye, mine are the forms and mine the sphere of eye-contact, where will you, recluse, go to escape me?"

Mine, O recluse, is the ear ... Mine, O recluse is the nose ... Mine, O recluse is the tongue ... Mine, O recluse is the body ...

Mine, O recluse is the mind, mine are the mind-objects and mine the sphere of mind-contact, where will you, recluse, go to escape me?"

Now this is how the Buddha responded to that challenge:

Taveva, pāpima, cakkhu, tava rūpā, tava cakkhusamphassaviññāyātanaü, yattha ca kho,

pàpima, n' atthi cakkhu, n' atthi rāpà, n' atthi cakkhusamphassaviṁṣāḍḍāyatanaü, agati tava tattha pàpima.

Taveva, pàpima, sotaü ... Taveva, pàpima, ghàḍḍaü ...

Taveva, pàpima, jivhaü ... Taveva, pàpima, kàyaü ...

Taveva, pàpima, mano, tava dhammà, tava

manosamphassaviṁṣāḍḍāyatanaü, yattha ca kho, pàpima,

n' atthi mano, n' atthi dhammà, n' atthi

manosamphassaviṁṣāḍḍāyatanaü, agati tava tattha pàpima.

"Yours, O Evil One, is the eye, yours are the forms and yours the sphere of eye-contact, but where there is no eye, no forms and no sphere of eye-contact, there you cannot go, Evil One.

Yours, Evil One, is the ear ... Yours, Evil One, is the nose ... Yours, Evil One, is the tongue ... Yours, Evil One, is the body ...

Yours, Evil One, is the mind, yours are the mind-objects and yours the sphere of mind-contact, but where there is no mind, no mind-objects and no sphere of mind-contact, there you cannot go, Evil One."

From the Buddha's reprisal to *Māra's* challenge, we can well infer that there indeed is a place to which *Māra* has no access. That is none other than the cessation of the six sense-spheres. Since it is something realizable, it is referred to as a 'sphere' in such contexts as, for instance, in the discourse on *Nibbāna* beginning with the words *atthi, bhikkhave, tad āyatanam*,¹³ "there is, monks, that sphere", etc.

It is this same cessation of the six sense-spheres that is referred to as *papañcanirodha* and *papañcavūpasama*, cessation or appeasement of conceptual proliferation. In the *Mahākoṭṭhitasutta* we discussed in our previous sermon, we found Venerable *Sāriputta* making the following conclusive statement to the same effect:

Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāganirodhā papañcanirodho papañcavūpasamo,¹⁴ "Friend, by the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there comes to be the cessation and appeasement of conceptual proliferation."

That itself is the non-prolific state. All concepts of 'going', 'coming', 'being born', 'growing old' and 'dying', are to be found in the prolific. They simply do not exist in the non-prolific. That is why it is inaccessible to *Māra*. In it, neither the sense-bases, such as the eye, ear and nose, nor

their respective objects are to be found. So it is clear that the cessation of the six sense-spheres is that state of release from *Māra*, attainable here and now.

All the six sense-spheres are built up on the perception of permanence. Therefore, the realization of their cessation is possible only through the perception of impermanence. The contemplation of impermanence is the path to its realization.

An extremely subtle contemplation on impermanence, that can bring about the cessation of the six sense-spheres, is to be found in the *Dvayamsutta* number two of the *Salāyatanavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. *Dvayaṃ* means a dyad. There are two discourses by that name, and this is the second. A strikingly deep vision of consciousness unfolds itself in this discourse as follows:

Dvayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti. Kathañca, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti? Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ. Cakkhu aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī. Rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino. Itthetaṃ dvayaṃ calañceva vyayañca aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī.

Cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī. Yo pi hetu yo pi paccayo cakkhuvīññāṇassa uppādāya, so pi hetu so pi paccayo anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī. Aniccaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, paccayaṃ paṭicca uppannaṃ cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ, kuto niccaṃ bhavissati?

Yā kho, bhikkhave, imesaṃ tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ saṅgati sannipāto samavāyo, ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, cakkhusamphasso. Cakkhusamphasso pi anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī. Yo pi hetu yo pi paccayo cakkhusamphassassa uppādāya, so pi hetu so pi paccayo anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī. Aniccaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, paccayaṃ paṭicca uppanno cakkhusamphasso, kuto nicco bhavissati?

*Phuṭṭho, bhikkhave, vedeti, phuṭṭho ceteti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti. Itthete pi dhammā calā ceva vayā ca aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*¹⁵

Even by listening to it, one can easily guess that there is a string of terms giving the idea of impermanence. Let us now try to translate it.

"Dependent on a dyad, monks, consciousness comes to be. How is it, monks, that consciousness comes to be dependent on a dyad? Depending on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. Eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing,

becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is unstable, evanescent, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

Eye-consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Whatever cause and condition there is for the arising of eye-consciousness, that cause, that condition, too, is impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise. How can eye-consciousness, arisen in dependence on an impermanent condition, be permanent, monks?

That concurrence, that meeting, that togetherness of these three things, monks, is called eye-contact. Even the eye-contact, monks is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Whatever cause and condition there is for the arising of eye-contact, that cause and condition, too, is impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise. How can eye-contact, arisen in dependence on an impermanent condition, be permanent, monks?

Contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one intends, contacted one perceives. Thus these things, too, are unstable, evanescent, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise."

The *Sutta* proceeds in this way, stressing the impermanence of the other sense-spheres as well, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. The entire discourse vibrates with the tone of impermanence.

It is the law of dependent arising that the Buddha presents here with reference to the six sense-spheres. In other words, how the world gets built up. It is not founded on stable existing things, but on what is impermanent, unstable and changing, whose nature is to become otherwise. This is how the entire perception of the world is built up. Its foundation is always crumbling, changing and transforming.

Generally, in the discourse dealing with the question of sense-restraint, one comes across the phrase *na nimittaggāhi nānuyyañjanaggāhī*, "he doesn't grasp a sign nor does he dwell on its details".¹⁶ The tendency to grasp a sign in regard to the objects of the six senses is the result of the perception of permanence. Due to the perception of permanence, there is a grasping of signs, and due to that grasping of signs, influxes flow in. Proliferations through craving, conceits and views get heaped up. This is how our world is constructed. This is the way the aggregates of attachment get accumulated. On the other hand, the contemplation of impermanence that leads to the signless concentration is helpful in freeing the mind from

these signs.

The reflection on an object can be of two types. Where there is a perception of permanence, the tendency is to grasp the object tenaciously and hang on to it. This pervert tendency is known as *parāmasana*. It is impelled by the triple proliferations of craving, conceits and views. Under its influence one is carried away by prolific perceptions, *papañcasaññā*, and is kept under the sway of worldly concepts and designations born of prolific perceptions, *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*.

On the contrary, the perception of impermanence fosters a detached and observant attitude in reflection, which is known as *sammasana*. It is that healthy attitude which progressively leads to the liberation of the mind from the influence of signs, and attenuates the prolific tendencies to craving, conceits and views. This kind of reflection is the harbinger of insight. Contemplation of impermanence on these lines effectively puts an end to this entire mass of *saṃsāric* suffering, as is evident from the following powerful declaration by the Buddha in the *Khandhasaṃyutta*.

*Aniccasañña, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā sabbaṃ kāmarāgaṃ pariyādiyati, sabbaṃ rūparāgaṃ pariyādiyati, sabbaṃ bhavarāgaṃ pariyādiyati, sabbaṃ avijjaṃ pariyādiyati, sabbaṃ asmimānaṃ pariyādiyati samūhanati.*¹⁷

"The perception of impermanence, monks, when developed and intensively practised, extirpates all sensual lust, extirpates all lust for forms, extirpates all lust for existence, extirpates all ignorance and extirpates and eradicates the conceit 'am'."

The contemplation of impermanence, therefore, strikes at the very root of this entire mass of *saṃsāric* suffering. The discourse on the dyad, quoted above, amply illustrates this fact. The recurrent terms like *cala*, "unstable", and *vaya*, "evanescent", in the passage, indicate that the entire superstructure of sensory knowledge is founded on certain pervert attitudes. An imperceptible impermanence underlies it.

In a number of sermons we had to bring up the simile of the motion picture. The simile is not our own, but only a modernization of a canonical simile used by the Buddha himself. The point of divergence was the question the Buddha had addressed to the monks in the *Gaddulasutta*.

*Diṭṭhaṃ vo, bhikkhave, caraṇaṃ nāma cittaṃ?*¹⁸ "Monks, have you seen a picture called a movie?" The monks answer in the affirmative, and

so the Buddha proceeds:

Tampi kho, bhikkhave, caraṇaṃ nāma cittaṃ citteneva cintitaṃ. Tena pi kho, bhikkhave, caraṇena citta cittaññeva cittaṭaraṃ. "Monks, that picture called a movie is something thought out by the mind. But the thought itself, monks, is even more picturesque than that picture."

To say that it is more picturesque is to suggest its variegated character. Thought is intrinsically variegated. We have no idea what sort of a motion picture was there at that time, but the modern day movie has a way of concealing impermanence by the rapidity of projections of the series of pictures on the screen. The rapidity itself gives an impression of permanence, which is a perversion, *vipallāsa*.

The movie is enjoyable because of this perversion. Due to the perception of permanence, there is a grasping of signs, and in the wake of it influxes flow in, giving rise to proliferation, due to which one is overwhelmed by reckonings born of prolific conceptualization, *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*. That is how one enjoys a film show. All this comes about as a result of ignorance, or lack of awareness of the cinematographic tricks concealing the fleeting, vibrating and evanescent nature of the scenes on the screen.

Though we resort to such artificial illustrations, by way of a simile, the Buddha declares that actually it is impossible to give a fitting simile to illustrate the rapidity of a thought process. Once he proclaimed: *Upamā pi na sukarā yāva lahuparivattaṃ cittaṃ*,¹⁹ "it is not easy even to give a simile to show how rapidly thought changes".

Sometimes the Buddha resorts to double entendre to bring out piquantly some deep idea. He puns on the word *citta*, "thought" or "picture", in order to suggest the 'picturesque' or variegated nature of thought, when he asserts that thought is more picturesque, *cittaṭara*, than the picture. We can see that it is quite reasonable in the light of the *Dvayamsutta*. It is this series of picturesque formations that gives us a perception of permanence, which in turn is instrumental in creating a world before our eyes.

Our eye changes every split second. It is quivering, vibrating and transient. So also are the forms. But there is a malignantly pervert idea, ingrained in *samsāric* beings, known as the perception of permanence in the impermanent, *anicce niccasaññā*, which prevents them from seeing the inherent transience of eye and forms. That is how the six spheres of sense create a world before us.

It is the substructure of this sense created world that the Buddha has revealed to us in this particular discourse on impermanence. The substructure, on analysis, reveals a duality, *dvayam*, *bhikkhave*, *paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti*, "dependent on a dyad, monks, arises consciousness".

Consciousness is not something substantial and absolute, like the so-called soul. That is precisely the point of divergence for Buddhism, when compared with those religious systems which rely on soul theories.

In the *Dhamma* there is mention of six consciousnesses, as *cakkhuviññāṇa*, *sotaviññāṇa*, *ghānaviññāṇa*, *jivhāviññāṇa*, *kāyaviññāṇa* and *manoviññāṇa*, eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind-consciousness. Everyone of these consciousnesses is based on a dyad. Just as in the case of eye-consciousness we are given the formula beginning with *cakkhuṅca paṭicca rūpe ca*, "dependent on eye and forms", so with regard to ear-consciousness we get *sotaṅca paṭicca sadde ca*, "dependent on ear and sounds", and so on. Even when we come to mind-consciousness, the theme is the same, *manaṅca paṭicca dhamme ca*, "dependent on mind and mind-objects". Mind also is vibrating, changing and transforming with extreme rapidity every moment. So are the objects of the mind.

The entire world is structured on these vibrant, transient and evanescent basic elements. That is the burden of this powerful discourse of the Buddha. Therefore, if someone developed the contemplation of impermanence to the highest degree and brought his mind to the signless state, having started from the sign itself, it goes without saying that he has realized the cessation of the world. That is, the experience of *Nibbāna*.

It is, at the same time, the cessation of proliferation, *papañcanirodha*. Prolific conceptualization is founded on the perception of permanence, whereby one comes under the sway of reckonings born of prolific perceptions, *papañcasaññāsankhā*. Proliferation creates things, giving rise to the antinomian conflict. Duality masquerades behind it.

It is by mistaking the impermanent eye and the impermanent forms as permanent that the whole confusion has come about. One imagines the eye and forms as permanent and thereby becomes blind to their momentary change and transience. The glue of craving and intoxicating influxes create a facade of a real world before him. That is the world we touch with our hands and see with our eyes. All this exposes the insubstantial nature of this world.

The products of the six sense-bases can be summed up by the four terms *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta* and *viññāta*, things seen, heard, sensed and cognized. The *Dvayamsutta* brings to light the fact that all these four are insubstantial and coreless. Due to this very fact, the *Tathāgata* who realized the cessation of the six sense-bases, was confronted with the stupendous problem of mediating with the world that could not even imagine the frightful prospect of a cessation of the six sense-bases. That is to say, when he reached the state of non-proliferation, *nippapañca*, by experiencing the cessation of the world through the cessation of the six sense-bases, the *Tathāgata* had to grapple with the serious problem of truth and falsehood in mediating with the world.

There is an extremely important discourse connected with the idea of the void, *suññatāpaṭisamyutta*, which echoes this epistemological crisis, in the section of the Fours in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, entitled *Kālakārāmasutta*. This *Kālakārāmasutta* was preached by the Buddha to the congregation of monks at the *Kāḷaka* monastery in the city of *Sāketa*. The discourse, though brief, is one that is extremely deep in its presentation of the idea of the void.

Before getting down to an exposition of this discourse, by way of sketching its historical background, we may mention a few things. Apart from the mention of the venue, nothing much could be gleaned from the discourse itself as to how it was inspired. The commentaries, however, relate the episode of *Cūlasubbhaddhā*, daughter of *Anāthapiṇḍika*, to explain the context in which the discourse was preached.

Cūlasubbhaddhā, who was a stream-winner, *sotāpannā*, was given in marriage to the son of the millionaire *Kāḷaka* of *Sāketa*, a devout follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. *Cūlasubbhaddhā* managed to convert *Kāḷaka* by inviting the Buddha to *Sāketa* and getting him to listen to the *Dhamma*. After his conversion, he built a monastery in his park and offered it to the Buddha.

The commentary says that a group of five-hundred newly ordained monks of *Sāketa* gathered in this *Kāḷaka* monastery and were speaking in praise of the Buddha, marvelling at his extraordinary feat of converting the millionaire and the inhabitants of *Sāketa*. It was at this juncture that the Buddha came and addressed this deep discourse to those monks. According to the commentary, the discourse was so profound that at five

points of the sermon the earth shook miraculously and at the end of the sermon all the five-hundred monks who listened to it attained *arahant*-hood.

It is chronicled in the history of Buddhism that, during the great missionary movement initiated by the emperor *Asoka*, Venerable *Mahārakkhita* was sent to convert the country of the *Yonakas*. The very first sermon he preached there was based on this *Kālakārāmasutta*, on hearing which thirty-seven-thousand attained fruits of the noble path. If the identification of the *Yonakas* with the Greeks is correct, the choice of this deeply philosophical discourse is understandable.

According to the chronicles and the commentaries, another significant occasion in which the *Kālakārāmasutta* served as a theme was when *Kālabuddharakkhita Thera* gave an all-night sermon on the dark night of the new-moon *Poya* day, seated under the black Timbaru tree at *Cetiya Pabbata* in Sri Lanka. King *Saddhātissa* was also present in the audience.

The fact that this discourse was held in high esteem is evident from its historical background. As in the case of many other deep discourses, here too we are faced with the problem of variant readings. Even the commentator is at a loss to conclude and editors go their own way. We have to wade through the variant readings to make some sense out of the discourse as it is handed down. Let us now take up the relevant portions of this abstruse discourse.

Yaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṭaṃ manasā, taṃ ahaṃ jānāmi.

Yaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṭaṃ manasā, taṃ ahaṃ abhaññāsiṃ. Taṃ tathāgataṃ viditaṃ, taṃ tathāgato na upaṭṭhāsi.

Yaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṭaṃ manasā, taṃ ahaṃ ‘na jānāmi’ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ mama assa musā, taṃ ahaṃ ‘jānāmi ca na ca jānāmi’ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ p’ assa tādisaṃ eva, taṃ ahaṃ ‘neva jānāmi na na jānāmi’ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ mama assa kali.

Iti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati, adiṭṭhaṃ na maññati, daṭṭhabbaṃ na maññati, daṭṭhāraṃ na maññati. Sutā sotabbaṃ sutāṃ na maññati, asutaṃ na maññati, sotabbaṃ na maññati, sotāraṃ na maññati. Mutā motabbaṃ mutaṃ na maññati, amutaṃ na maññati, motabbaṃ na maññati, motāraṃ na maññati. Viññātā viññātābbaṃ viññātaṃ na maññati, aviññātaṃ na maññati, viññātābbaṃ na maññati, viññātāraṃ na maññati.

Iti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato diṭṭha-suta-muta-viññātābbesu dhammesu tādī, yeva tādī tamhā ca pana tādīmhā añño tādī uttaritaro vā paṇītataro vā n' atthī'ti vadāmi.

*Yaṃ kiñci diṭṭhaṃ va sutāṃ mutaṃ vā,
ajjhositāṃ saccamutaṃ pasesaṃ,
na tesu tādī saya saṃvutesu,
saccaṃ musā vā pi paraṃ daheyyaṃ.*

*Etañca sallaṃ paṭigacca disvā,
ajjhositā yattha pajā visattā,
jānāmi passāmi tath' eva etaṃ,
ajjhositāṃ n' atthi tathāgatānaṃ.²⁰*

"Monks, whatsoever in the world, with its gods, *Māras* and Brahmas, among the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men, whatsoever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, thought after and pondered over by the mind, all that do I know.

Monks, whatsoever in the world, with its gods, *Māras* and Brahmas, among the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men, whatsoever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, thought after and pondered over by the mind, that have I fully understood. All that is known to the *Tathāgata*, but the *Tathāgata* has not taken his stand upon it.

If I were to say, monks, whatsoever in the world, with its gods, *Māras* and Brahmas, among the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men, whatsoever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, thought after and pondered over by the mind, all that I do not know, it would be a falsehood in me. If I were to say I both know it and know it not, that too would be a falsehood in me. If I were to say I neither know it nor am ignorant of it, it would be a fault in me.

Thus, monks, a *Tathāgata* does not imagine a visible thing as apart from seeing, he does not imagine an unseen, he does not imagine a thing

worth seeing, he does not imagine a seer. He does not imagine an audible thing as apart from hearing, he does not imagine an unheard, he does not imagine a thing worth hearing, he does not imagine a hearer. He does not imagine a thing to be sensed as apart from sensation, he does not imagine an unsensed, he does not imagine a thing worth sensing, he does not imagine one who senses. He does not imagine a cognizable thing as apart from cognition, he does not imagine an uncognized, he does not imagine a thing worth cognizing, he does not imagine one who cognizes.

Thus, monks, the *Tathāgata*, being such in regard to all phenomena, seen, heard, sensed and cognized, is such. Moreover than he who is such there is none other higher or more excellent, I declare.

Whatever is seen, heard, sensed,
Or clung to and esteemed as truth by other folk,
Midst those who are entrenched in their own views,
Being such, I hold none as true or false.

This barb I beheld well in advance,
Whereon mankind is hooked, impaled,
I know, I see, 'tis verily so,
No such clinging for the *Tathāgatas*."

In the first statement the Buddha declares that he knows, *tam ahaṃ jānāmi*, whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, thought after and pondered over by all beings in the world, and that is the sum total of the knowledge acquired through the six sense-bases.

In the second statement he affirms that the knowledge he has is of a higher order, *tam ahaṃ abhāññāsiṃ*, that amounts to an understanding, *taṃ tathāgatassa viditaṃ*, by virtue of which he does not take his stand upon it, he has no stance, *taṃ tathāgato na upaṭṭhāsi*.

The third statement flows from this detached perspective. It is to the effect that the *Tathāgata* cannot disclaim knowledge, despite his detached attitude, as it would be tantamount to prevarication in the eyes of the world, *taṃ mama assa musā*.

The fourth statement highlights the same incongruity, because the *Tathāgata* placed in this awkward situation cannot compromise by both claiming and disclaiming knowledge at the same time, *tam ahaṃ 'jānāmi ca na ca jānāmi' ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ p' assa tādisam eva*.

As the fifth statement makes it clear, the *Tathāgata* does not deem it fit to wriggle out by neither claiming nor disclaiming knowledge of sense-data.

Then comes the declaration as to how the *Tathāgata* treats this body of sensory knowledge of the worldling. "Thus, monks, a *Tathāgata* does not imagine a visible thing as apart from the seen", *iti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati*.

We have come across the terms *diṭṭha*, *suta*, *muta*, *viññāta* quite often, for instance in our discussion of the *Bāhiyasutta* in the context *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*, "in the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized."²¹

In common parlance, the word 'seen' connotes something seen. But here we have something more radical, avoiding substantialist insinuations. It is just the seen in the seen, implied by *diṭṭha*, in this context too. The *Tathāgata* takes it just as a seen, without imagining that there is something substantial worthwhile seeing, as apart from it, *diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati*.

We are already familiar with the term *maññanā*, having discussed it in such discourses as the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* and the *Bāhiyasutta*.²² It stands for imaginings, prompted by cravings, conceits and views. The *Tathāgata* is free from such imaginings. He does not imagine a thing worthwhile seeing apart from the seen, nor does he imagine an unseen, *adiṭṭhaṃ na maññati*. The phenomenon of seeing is not denied.

The phrase *daṭṭhabbaṃ na maññati* conveys the idea that the *Tathāgata* does not imagine that there is something worth seeing, that there is something essential in it. *Daṭṭhāraṃ na maññati*, he does not imagine a seer or one who sees. He does not project an agent into the phenomenon by taking seriously the subject-object relationship.

With regard to the heard, *suta*, the sensed, *muta*, and the cognized, *viññāta*, too, the *Tathāgata* has no such imaginings. Then, in summing up it is said: *Iti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato diṭṭha-suta-muta-viññātabbesu dhammesu tādi, yeva tādi*, "thus, monks, the *Tathāgata*, being such in regard to all phenomena, seen, heard, sensed and cognized, is 'such'."

The term *tādi*, too, came up in a number of our earlier sermons.²³ We

rendered it by "such". It stands for the quality of steadfastness of the *arahant* in remaining unshaken by the eight worldly vicissitudes. His mainstay, in this respect, is *atammayatā*, or non-identification. He is such because he does not grasp any of those things as 'mine'. So he is 'such' in regard to whatever is seen, heard, sensed and cognized. There is no one who is higher or more excellent than this such-like-one in point of suchness. Then comes a couplet of verses, presenting the gist of the sermon.

Our rendering of the sermon is in need of further explication. Though it gives a general idea, some words and phrases in the original have far reaching implications. The basic idea behind the series of declarations made is the extraordinary change of attitude towards the question of speculative views, which marks off the *Tathāgata* from all his contemporaries. He took a completely different turn, transcending the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism. This difference of attitude is revealed by the riddle like statements in the first part of the discourse. One gets the impression that the *Tathāgata* was confronted with a problematic situation of the highest order.

The first statement is to the effect that the *Tathāgata* knows whatever in the world with its gods, *Māras* and Brahmas, among the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men, is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, thought after and pondered over by the mind.

The second statement asserts that the *Tathāgata* has a higher understanding of all that. All the same, he takes no stance in regard to whatever is seen, heard, sensed and cognized.

This might appear as a riddle. Usually when one has a higher understanding of something, one is inclined to take one's stand upon it. But here we have a denial. The discourse bears some resemblance to the tetralemma we had discussed earlier.²⁴ But there seems to be a difference here, in the formulation of the first proposition of the tetralemma.

Normally the first proposition amounts to an unqualified assertion of the affirmative standpoint. In this case, however, we find the statement that the *Tathāgata* not only knows all what the world knows, but that he has a higher understanding of it, *abhaññāsīṃ*. It is precisely because he has a higher understanding that he takes no stance in regard to it.

This might appear problematic, but let us remind ourselves of the two

levels of understanding mentioned in the *Mūlapariyāyasutta*, discussed earlier, namely *sañjānāti* and *abhijānāti*. As an instance of the first level of understanding, we get the following passage in that discourse in regard to the untaught ordinary person, *assutavā puthujjano*:

*Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito sañjānāti. Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito saññatvā paṭhaviṃ maññāti, paṭhaviyā maññāti, paṭhavito maññāti, 'paṭhaviṃ me'ti maññāti, paṭhaviṃ abhinandati.*²⁵ "He perceives earth as 'earth'. Having perceived earth as 'earth', he imagines 'earth' as such, he imagines 'on the earth', he imagines 'from the earth', he imagines 'earth is mine', he delights in earth."

The untaught ordinary person has a perceptual knowledge of earth, *sañjānāti*. That, too, is a level of knowledge. It is in fact the lowest grade of knowing. The untaught ordinary person can do no better than perceive earth as earth.

Having perceived earth as earth, he takes it seriously by its face value and goes on imagining by way of craving, conceit and views, granting it object-status. He imposes the grammatical superstructure on it. He imagines 'on the earth', he imagines 'from the earth', he imagines 'earth is mine', he delights in earth. This, then, is the lowest grade of knowledge.

On the other hand, about the *Tathāgata*'s level of understanding, the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* has the following description:

Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhijānāti, paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhiññāya paṭhaviṃ na maññāti, paṭhaviyā na maññāti, paṭhavito na maññāti, 'paṭhaviṃ me'ti na maññāti, paṭhaviṃ nābhinandati. "He understands through higher knowledge earth as 'earth', having understood through higher knowledge earth as 'earth', he does not imagine earth to be 'earth', he does not imagine 'on the earth', he does not imagine 'from the earth', he does not imagine 'earth is mine', he does not delight in earth."

The *Tathāgata*, who has a higher knowledge of earth, as suggested by the word *abhijānāti*, does not entertain imaginings by taking earth at its face value. He is not carried away by the grammatical structure to imagine in such terms as 'on the earth' and 'from the earth'.

In the present context, too, the same distinction in grades of knowledge is evident. Firstly, the *Tathāgata* says: "All that do I know, that have I fully understood. All that is known to the *Tathāgata*." It is precisely because of this full understanding that he has not taken his stand upon it.

He has no stance in regard to all that. This is the gist of the first paragraph of the discourse, which sounds more or less a paradox. It is because of this apparently queer state of affairs that the *Tathāgata* had to confess that it would be a falsehood on his part to say: "All that I do not know".

If someone asks whether it is because he does not know that he takes no stance, he cannot say: "Yes". As a matter of fact, it is precisely because he has understood that he takes no stance. But the worldlings are of the opinion that knowledge of a thing entitles one to assert it dogmatically.

To say "I both know it and know it not" or "I neither know it nor am ignorant of it" would also be mistaken by the world as a prevarication or equivocation. The first paragraph of the discourse has to be understood in this light.

The commentary has it that the earth shook at five points in the discourse. According to it the three significant terms *jānāmi*, *abbhaññāsīm* and *viditaṃ*, "I know", "I have fully understood", all that is "known" to the *Tathāgata* represent a plane of omniscience, *sabbaññutabhūmi*, peculiar to a Buddha.²⁶ Even at the end of this proclamation of omniscience, it is said the earth shook as a mark of approbation.

Then the phrase *na upaṭṭhāsi*, "does not take his stand upon it", is interpreted by the commentary as indicating the plane of the influx-free one, *khīṇāsavabhūmi*. Why the *Tathāgata* has no stance in regard to sensory data is said to be due to his freedom from influxes. He does not

1. MI436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
2. SI 62 and A II 50 *Rohitassasutta*; see sermon 23.
3. S IV 95, *Lokakāmaguṇasutta*.
4. Ud 80, *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga*.
5. See sermon 7.
6. Ud 80, *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga*.
7. Ud 81, *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga*.
8. S III 189, *Mārosutta*.
9. See sermon 14.
10. See sermon 3.
11. Sn 1103, *Bhadrāvudhamāṇavappucchā*
12. S I 115, *Kassakasutta*.
13. Ud 80, *Pāṭaligāmiyavagga*.
14. A II 162, *Mahākoṭṭhitasutta*; see sermon 23.
15. S IV 67, *Dutiyadvayamsutta*.
16. E.g. in D I 70, *Sāmaññaphalasutta*.
17. S III 155, *Aniccasaññāsutta*.
18. S III 150, *Gaddulasutta*; see also sermons 5 and 6.
19. A I 10, *Paṇihita-acchavagga*.
20. A II 25, *Kālakārāmasutta*.
21. Ud 8, *Bāhiyasutta*, see sermon 14.
22. See sermons 12 to 15.
23. See sermons 17 and 22.
24. See sermon 20.
25. MI 1, *Mūlapariyāyasutta*.
26. Mp III 38.

Sermon - 25

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

*Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*¹

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

With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the twenty-fifth sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*. The other day we made an attempt to understand, in the light of the *Kāḷakārāmasutta*, the enlightened attitude of the *Tathāgata*, who has realized the cessation of the six bases of sense-contact, towards the view-points of the worldlings, who find themselves confined within those six bases.

In that discourse, the Buddha declared with the words *tam ahaṃ jānāmi*, "[all] that do I know",² the fact that he has understood all what the world with its gods, *Māras* and Brahmas, and the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men, have seen, heard, sensed, cognized, thought after and pondered over by the mind.

By his next assertion *tam ahaṃ abbhaññāsiṃ*, the Buddha proclaimed that he not only knows all that, but knows it thoroughly in some special way. With the words *taṃ tathāgatassa viditaṃ*, he declares that by virtue of this special knowledge he has understood all what the world claims to know. Despite this special knowledge and understanding, the *Tathāgata* takes no stance and has no inclination or partiality towards those sensory data, as is evident from the expression *taṃ tathāgato na upaṭṭhāsi*.

Worldings in general are in the habit of asserting dogmatically 'I know, I see, it is verily so', *jānāmi passāmi tath' eva etaṃ*,³ when they have a special knowledge or understanding of something or other. But according to this discourse, it seems that the Buddha takes no stance and has no inclination or partiality towards those sensory data, precisely because he has a special knowledge and understanding with regard to them. This fact is highlighted by the concluding summary verses, particularly by the lines:

*Jānāmi passāmi tath' eva etaṃ,
ajjhositāṃ n' atthi tathāgatānaṃ.*

I know, I see, 'tis verily so. No such clinging for the Tathāgatas. In order to explain this strange difference of attitude, we quoted the other day two significant terms from the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, namely *sañjānāti* and *abhijānāti*. They represent two levels of knowledge in the context of that particular discourse.

Sañjānāti stands for perceptual knowledge, whereas *abhijānāti* conveys the idea of some special understanding of a higher order. The level of knowledge implied by the term *sañjānāti* is that which characterizes the ordinary worldling's world view. He is deluded by the mirage-like perception in his view of the world and goes on imagining, *maññanā*, a real world enslaved to the patterns of the grammatical structure.

But the *Tathāgata* has penetrated into the true nature of those seen, heard, sensed and the like, with his extraordinary level of higher knowledge, *abhiññā*, yielding full comprehension. Therefore, he does not take his stand upon any of them. He has no stance to justify the usage of the term *upaṭṭhāsi*, since he does not entertain imaginings, *maññanā*.

What is called *maññanā* is the imagining in egoistic terms, imparting reality to illusory things. It is this principle of refraining from vain imaginings that is indicated by the term *na upaṭṭhāsi*, "does not take his stand upon".

Tathāgatas have no clinging or entanglement, *ajjhositāṃ*, precisely because they entertain no imaginings. In regard to things seen, heard, etc. the *Tathāgatas* have no clinging, binding or entanglement by way of craving, conceit and views, respectively.

We happened to mention the other day that those peculiar declarations, with which the *Kālakārāmasutta* opens, bear some resemblance to the tetralemma discussed in our treatment of the undetermined points.⁴

The set of four alternative propositions concerning the *Tathāgata*'s after death state may be cited as a paradigm for the tetralemma.

- 1) *Hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā*,
"the *Tathāgata* exists after death";
- 2) *na hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā*,

"the *Tathāgata* does not exist after death";

3) *hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā*,

"the *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death";

4) *n'eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā*,

"the *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death".⁵

The declarations found in this discourse bear some affinity to the above-mentioned tetralemma. However, we find here the Buddha making the first declaration in several stages. Firstly, he makes the statement that whatever is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, thought after and pondered over by all beings in the world, that he knows.

In the second statement he affirms that he has a higher knowledge of all that. Then comes a sentence which reaffirms that the *Tathāgata* has understood, but ends with the statement "the *Tathāgata* does not take his stand upon it".

Generally, when confronted with the tetralemma, the Buddha summarily dismisses all the four alternative propositions. But here the peculiarity is in not dismissing the first proposition at once. He declares that he knows, that he has a higher knowledge, and that he has understood all that.

Apparently he is affirming the first proposition, granting the validity of sensory data. But then comes the concluding statement to the effect that he does not take his stand upon them, *na upatthāsi*, which amounts to a negation.

The secret behind this peculiar presentation will emerge when we bring up the proper similes and parables. Till then, what can be gleaned from the context is that the *Tathāgata* has no stance, not because he is ignorant, but due to the very fact that he knows full well and has understood the nature of the sum total of sensory data.

The worldlings are prone to think that it is when convincing knowledge is lacking that one has no such stance. But the Buddha declares here that he takes no stance in regard to what is seen, heard, sensed etc., precisely because he has a special understanding, a penetrative knowledge of the essence-lessness of the data obtained through the six sense-bases.

So it seems, in this context too, we have the negation of the first alternative, as is usual in the case of a tetralemma, only that the negation is

expressed here in a very peculiar way. Let us now take up the second declaration.

Yaü, bhikkhave, sadevakassa lokassa samàrakassa
sabrahmakassa sassamaõabràhmaõiyà pajàya
sadevamanussàya diññaü sutaü mutaü vi~~va~~taü pattaü
pariyesitaü anuvicaritaü manasà, tam ahaü `na jà~~n~~àmã'ti
vadeyyaü, taü mama assa musà.

"If I were to say, monks, whatsoever in the world, with its gods, *Māras* and Brahmas, among the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men, whatsoever is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, thought after and pondered over by the mind, all that I do not know, it would be a falsehood in me."

There is a difference of opinion as to the correct reading of this second declaration. Deep *Suttas* often present difficulties in determining the exact reading, and this is especially the case with the *Kālakārāmasutta*.

In this instance, the commentary has followed the reading *tam ahaṃ 'jānāmī'ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ mama assa musā*, "if I were to say 'that I know', it would be a falsehood in me". But as we have pointed out earlier, this reading is not meaningful.⁶ That is probably why the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti-piṭaka* edition has followed the variant reading *tam ahaṃ 'na jānāmī'ti vadeyyaṃ*, "if I were to say 'that I do not know'. This departure from the commentarial tradition seems justifiable, since the Buddha has already declared that he knows all that.

It stands to reason, therefore, that in the second declaration he makes it clear that to say 'I do not know' would be a contradiction, a falsehood. But why this clarification?

Generally the worldlings expect one to unequivocally assert and take one's stand upon one's viewpoint in categorical terms, as expressed by the dictum *idam eva saccaṃ, moghaṃ aññaṃ*, "this alone is true, all else is false".⁷ Failure to do so is recognized as a lack of knowledge or precision. The second declaration is meant to forestall such an objection, since the first declaration ends with the clause *taṃ tathāgato na upaṭṭhāsi*, but "the *Tathāgata* has not taken his stand upon it". So it amounts to a statement like 'it is not because I do not know that I take no stance'. In the same strain, we can explain the declarations that follow.

It seems, then, that the second declaration *tam ahaṃ 'na jānāmī'ti*

vadeyyaṃ, taṃ mama assa musā, "if I were to say, 'all that I do not know', it would be a falsehood in me", amounts to the second alternative of the tetralemma.

The next declaration follows the same trend. To quote the relevant portion, *tam ahaṃ 'jānāmi ca na ca jānāmi'ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ p' assa tādisam eva*, "if I were to say 'I both know it and do not know it', that too would be a falsehood in me".

In regard to the aforesaid seens, hears, sensed etc., if I were to say that I know, I do not know, or even a combination of both those statements as 'I both know and do not know', it would be a falsehood on my part. Why? Because the world is accustomed to put down such a vacillation to a lack of certitude. To say 'I both know it and know it not' looks like a confession of partial knowledge, since it can mean knowledge and ignorance going fifty-fifty. So the Buddha says, in this instance, too, that it would likewise be a falsehood, *taṃ p' assa tādisam eva*.

Now we come to the fourth statement. The Buddha declares, "if I were to say 'I neither know it, nor am ignorant of it', it would be a fault in me", *tam ahaṃ 'neva jānāmi na na jānāmi'ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ mama assa kali*.

We can understand that position, too. Generally the worldlings think that a refusal to make a categorical statement is either due to partial knowledge, or to an attitude of wriggling out. In fact, this attitude of wriggling out had already assumed the status of a philosophy in itself in *Sañjaya Belatṭhiputta*, a contemporary of the Buddha.

When he was interrogated, he would respond with such a series of negations like "I do not say it is, I do not say it is thus, I do not say it is otherwise, nor do I say it is neither", etc.⁸ The attempt here is to evade the issue by a sort of 'eel-wriggling'. That school of philosophy, which resorted to such an evasive legerdemain, came to be known as *amarāvikkhepa-vāda*. The Buddha refuses to subscribe to such tactical sophistry by rejecting the fourth alternative 'I neither know it, nor am ignorant of it'.

Here, then, we have the same tetralemma, presented in a different guise. It smacks of a riddle that the Buddha was confronted with - the riddle of coming to terms with worldly parlance. As we have already mentioned, the commentary analyses the main theme of the discourse into five planes. It also records that the earth shook at five points of the discourse, that is, at the end of the proclamation for each plane.⁹

suggestive of an absolute *dr̥ṣṭvā*.

Taking the cue from this commentarial preference, the Burmese *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* edition goes a step further in substituting *sutvā*, *mutvā* and *viññatvā* rather arbitrarily to give an absolute twist to the three phrases that follow as *sutvā sotabbaṃ sutam*, *mutvā motabbaṃ mutam*, and *viññatvā viññātabbaṃ viññātam*. Probably the editors thought that in this context the terms *diṭṭha suta muta* and *viññāta* could not be interpreted as they are.

But we may point out that, in keeping with the line of interpretation we have followed so far, these three terms may be said to stand for an extremely deep dimension of this discourse, dealing with the void. The other day we simply gave a sketch of a possible rendering.

The statement *diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati* has to be interpreted as an assertion that the *Tathāgata* "does not imagine a sight worthwhile seeing as apart from the seen", that there is nothing substantial in the seen. So also the other statements, *sutā sotabbaṃ sutam na maññati*, "does not imagine a worthwhile hearing apart from the heard"; *mutā motabbaṃ mutam na maññati*, "does not imagine a worthwhile sensing apart from the sensed"; *viññātā viññātabbaṃ viññātam na maññati*, "does not imagine a worthwhile cognition apart from the cognized".

In case our interpretation still appears problematic, we may hark back to the *Bāhiyasutta* we have already explained at length.¹¹ The philosophy behind the Buddha's exhortation to the ascetic *Bāhiya* could be summed up in the words *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*,¹² "in the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized".

What is meant is that one has to stop at just the seen, without discursively imagining that there is some-‘thing’ seen, some-‘thing’ substantial behind the seen. Similarly in regard to the heard, one has to take it as just a heard, not some-‘thing’ heard.

In the case of the phrase *diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati* the word *diṭṭhā*, being in the ablative case, we may render it as "does not imagine a sight worthwhile seeing ‘as apart from’ the seen". By way of further clarification of this point, we may revert to the simile of the dog on

the plank, which we gave in our explanation of *nāma-rūpa*.¹³ The simile, of course, is not canonical, but of fable origin.

When a dog, while crossing a stream, stops halfway on the plank and starts wagging its tail and peeping curiously down, the reason is the sight of its own image in the water. It imagines a dog there, a 'water-dog'. The dog thinks that there is something worthwhile seeing, apart from the seen.

It is unaware of the fact that it is seeing what it sees because it is looking. It thinks that it is looking because there is something out there to be seen. The moment it realizes that it is seeing because it is looking, it will stop looking at its own image in the water.

We have here a very subtle point in the law of dependent arising, one that is integral to the analysis of name-and-form. So, then, due to the very ignorance of the fact that it is seeing because it is looking, the dog imagines another dog, there, in the water. What is called *maññanā* is an imagining of that sort.

No such imagining is there in the *Tathāgata*, *diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati*, "he does not imagine a sight worth seeing as apart from the seen". In short, for him the seen is the be all and the end all of it.

The seen is dependently arisen. It comes about due to a collocation of conditions, apart from which it has no existence per se. Every instance of looking down at the water is a fresh experience and every time an image of the dog in the water and of another looking at it is created. The dog is seeing its own image. Everything is dependently arisen, *phassapaccayā*, says the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, "dependent on contact".¹⁴

Here there is something really deep. It is because of the personality-view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, that the world is carried away by this illusion. One goes on looking saying that one is doing so as there is something to be seen. But the seen is there because of the looking.

This, then, is the moral behind the statement *diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbaṃ diṭṭhaṃ na maññati*, "does not imagine a seen worthwhile seeing as apart from the seen itself". This is the dictum implicit in the *Bāhiya-sutta*, too, which could be illustrated by the simile of the dog on the plank. The *Tathāgata* does not imagine a sight as existing apart from the bare act of seeing.

If further illustrations are needed, let us take the case of hearing music from a distance. One imagines a thing called 'music' and with the idea of

listening to the same music goes to the place where the music is going on. One is not aware of the fact that at each step in that direction one is hearing a different music. Why? Because one is ignorant of the law of dependent arising. Just as in the former case the dog seen is dependent on the dog looking, here too, the auditory consciousness of a music is the outcome of a dependence between ear and sound.

So, deluded as he is, he goes to the music hall to listen better to the same music. He will realize the extent of his delusion if he happens to put his ear to the musical instrument. When he does so, he will hear not a music, but a set of crude vibrations. But this is what is going on in the world. The world is steeped in the delusion of imagining that it is the same music one is hearing, though at each step in that direction the music changes. This is due to the fact that it is dependently arisen. Actually, there is no person hearing, but only a state of affairs dependent on the ear and sound, a conditioned arising dependent on contact. In the present textual context, the terms *diṭṭha suta muta* and *viññāta*, seen, heard, sensed and cognized, have to be understood in this light.

So this is how the phrase *diṭṭhā daṭṭhabbam diṭṭham na maññati* has to be interpreted. But the commentary does not seem to have appreciated the relevance of this paragraph to the Buddha's teachings on voidness. While commenting on *diṭṭham na maññati* it expatiates '*ahaṃ mahājanena diṭṭhameva passāmī'ti taṇhāmānadiṭṭhīhi na maññati*. According to it, what is meant is that the *Tathāgata* does not imagine by way of cravings, conceits and views that he is seeing just what the common people have seen. This is an oversimplification, a rather shallow interpretation.

The next phrase, *adiṭṭham na maññati*, is similarly explained, '*adiṭṭham na maññatī'ti 'ahaṃ mahājanena adiṭṭhameva etaṃ passāmī' ti evampi taṇhādīhi maññanāhi na maññati*, "he does not imagine an unseen" means that the *Tathāgata* does not imagine by way of imaginings through craving etc. that he is seeing something unseen by the common people. The commentary, it seems, has gone at a tangent, bypassing the deeper sense.

We have already explained the deeper significance of the phrase, *diṭṭham na maññati*, "does not imagine a seen". Now what does *adiṭṭham na maññati* mean?

In terms of our simile of the dog on the plank, *diṭṭham na maññati* means that the *Tathāgata* does not imagine a dog in the water. *Adiṭṭham na*

maññati could therefore mean that the *Tathāgata* does not imagine that the dog has not seen. Why he does not treat it as an unseen should be clear from that declaration we had already cited, ending with *tam ahaṃ 'na jānāmī'ti vadeyyaṃ, taṃ mama assa musā*, "if I were to say 'that I do not know', it would be a falsehood in me".

The fact of seeing is not denied, though what is seen is not taken as a dog, but only as an image of one, that is dependently arisen. Since the understanding of it as a dependently arisen phenomenon is there, the *Tathāgata* does not imagine an unseen either, *adiṭṭhaṃ na maññati*.

The phrase *daṭṭhabbaṃ na maññati*, is also explicable in the light of the foregoing discussion. Now, the dog on the plank keeps on looking down at the water again and again because it thinks that there is something worthwhile seeing in the water. Such a delusion is not there in the *Tathāgata*. He knows that at each turn it is a phenomenon of a seen dependently arisen, dependent on contact, *phassa-paccayā*.

Every time it happens, it is a fresh sight, a new preparation, *saṅkhāra*. So there is nothing to look for in it. Only a looking is there, nothing worth looking at. Only a seeing is there, nothing to be seen. Apart from the bare act of hearing, there is nothing to be heard. It is the wrong view of a self that gives a notion of substantiality. The above phrase, therefore, is suggestive of insubstantiality, essencelessness, and voidness.

Music is just a word. By taking seriously the concept behind that word, one imagines a thing called 'music'. The pandemonium created by a number of musical instruments is subsumed under the word 'music'. Then one goes all the way to listen to it. The same state of affairs prevails in the case of the seen. It is because the *Tathāgata* has understood this fact that he does not imagine a thing worth seeing or hearing. The same applies to the other sensory data.

Then comes the phrase *daṭṭhāraṃ na maññati*, "does not imagine a seer". Here we have the direct expression of voidness - the voidness of a self or anything belonging to a self. Now that dog on the plank has not understood the fact that there is a mutual relationship between the looking dog and the seen dog. It is because of the looking dog that the seen dog is seen. There is a conditioned relationship between the two.

In other words, dependent on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness, *cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ*.¹⁵ The mere presence of the eye is not enough for eye consciousness to arise, but

dependent on eye and forms, arises eye-consciousness.

Though stated simply, it has a depth that is not easy to fathom. To say that it is dependent on eye and form is to admit that it is dependently arisen. The law of dependent arising is already implicated. There is therefore no seer, apart from the phenomenon of seeing, according to the *Tathāgata*. He does not imagine a seer, *daṭṭhāraṃ na maññati*. For the worldling, the bare act of seeing carries with it a perception of 'one who sees'. He has a notion of a self and something belonging to a self.

The same teaching is found in the *Bāhiya-sutta*. After instructing *Bāhiya* to stop at just the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized, the Buddha goes on to outline the end result of that training.

*Yato kho te, Bāhiya, diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena. Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha. Yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya nev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena. Es' ev' anto dukkhassa.*¹⁶

"And when to you, *Bāhiya*, there will be in the seen just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the sensed just the sensed, in the cognized just the cognized, then, *Bāhiya*, you are not by it. And when, *Bāhiya*, you are not by it, then, *Bāhiya*, you are not in it. And when, *Bāhiya*, you are not in it, then, *Bāhiya*, you are neither here nor there nor in between. This, itself, is the end of suffering."

That is to say, when, *Bāhiya*, you have gone through that training of stopping at just the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized, then you would not be imagining in terms of them. The algebraic - like expressions *na tena* and *na tattha* have to be understood as forms of egoistic imagining, *maññanā*.

When you do not imagine in terms of them, you would not be in them. There would be no involvement in regard to them. In the case of that music, for instance, you would not be in the orchestra. The egoistic imagining, implicating involvement with the music, presupposes a hearer, *sotaram*, dwelling in the orchestra.

When, *Bāhiya*, you do not dwell in it, *yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha*, then, *Bāhiya*, you are neither here, nor there, nor in between the two, *tato tvaṃ Bāhiya nev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena*. This itself is the end of suffering. In other words, you would have realized voidness, *suññatā*.

The expressions *daṭṭhāraṃ na maññati*, "does not imagine a seer"; *sotāraṃ na maññati*, "does not imagine a hearer"; *motāraṃ na maññati*, "does not imagine a sensor"; and *viññātāraṃ na maññati*, "does not imagine a knower", have to be understood in this light. The *Tathāgata* does not even imagine a thinker apart from thought. This is the plane of the void, *suññatābhūmi*, the perfect realization of the corelessness or essencelessness of the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized.

The very absence of *maññanā*, or "egoistic imagining", is to be understood by *suññatābhūmi*, or "the plane of the void". The worldling takes seriously the subject-object relationship in the grammatical structure, as it seems the simplest explanation of phenomena. Because there is something to be seen, there is someone who sees. Because there is someone who sees, there is something to be seen.

There is a duality between these two. To understand the law of dependent arising is to be free from this duality. It is the ability to see a concatenation of conditions, a conglomeration of causal factors - an assemblage instead of a bifurcation.

The way of the worldlings, however, is to follow the subject-object relationship, a naive acceptance of the grammatical structure, which is the easiest mode of communication of ideas. They are misled by it to take seriously such notions as 'one who sees' and a 'thing seen', 'one who hears' and a 'thing heard', but the *Tathāgata* is free from that delusion. Now we come to the fifth section of the discourse, known as *tādibhūmi*, the "plane of the such". It runs:

Iti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato diṭṭha-suta-muta-viññātabbesu dhammesu tādī yeva tādī, tamhā ca pana tādīmhā añño tādī uttaritaro vā pañītataro vā n' atthī'ti vadāmi.

"Thus, monks, the *Tathāgata*, being such in regard to all phenomena, seen, heard, sensed and cognized, is such. Moreover than he who is such there is none other higher or more excellent, I declare."

The most difficult word, here, is *tādī*. We have already explained it to some extent. It can be rendered by "such" or "thus". The commentary explains it by the phrase *tādītā nāma ekasadisatā*,¹⁷ "suchness means to be always alike".

By way of illustration, the commentary states *Tathāgato ca yādiso lābhādīsu, tādīsova alābhādīsu*, "as he is in regard to gain etc., so is the

Tathāgata in regard to loss etc.". The allusion here is to the eight worldly vicissitudes, gain/loss, fame/ill-fame, praise/blame, and pleasure/pain.¹⁸

But this explanation is rather misleading, as it ignores a certain deep dimension of the meaning of the term *tādī*. When it is said "as he is in regard to gain, so is he in regard to loss", one can ask: 'how is he in regard to gain?' This is imprecise as a meaning.

However, the commentator happens to quote from the *Mahāniddeśa* another explanation, which is more to the point. It is briefly stated as *iṭṭhāniṭṭhe tādī*, "such in regard to the desirable and the undesirable"; and explained as *lābhēpi tādī, alābhēpi tādī, yasepi tādī,*¹⁹ *ayasepi tādī, nindāyapi tādī, pasamsāyapi tādī, sukhepi tādī, dukkhepi tādī*, "he is such in gain as well as in loss, he is such in fame as well as in ill-fame ..." etc. That is the correct explanation. Instead of saying "as he is in gain, so is he in loss", we have here a continuous suchness in regard to all vicissitudes. He is such in gain as well as in loss, he is such in fame as well as in ill-fame, he is such in praise as well as in blame, he is such in pleasure as well as in pain.

The reason for this suchness we have explained on an earlier occasion.²⁰ In one sense, the term *tādī* stands for the understanding of the norm called *tathatā*. The other implication is the abstinence from the tendency towards identification or acquisition, meant by *tammayatā*. This exemplary trait is called *atammayatā*. This is an extremely important term, occurring in the discourses, which, however, has fallen into neglect at present.

In the case of music, for instance, *tammayatā* would imply an attachment to it that amounts to an identification with it. *Tammayo* means "made of that", as in *suvaṇṇamaya*, "made of gold", and *rajatamaya*, "made of silver". To be free from this *tammayatā*, is to be *tādī*, "such", that is to say, not to be of that stuff, *atammayatā*. The attitude of not leaning on or grasping is meant by it.

The quality of being *tādī*, or "such", is often rendered by "firmness", "steadfastness", and "immovability". Generally, one associates firmness, immovability or stability with holding on or leaning on. But here we have just the contrary. Not to hold on to anything, is to be 'such'. This suchness has a flexibility of a higher order, or an adaptability. The adaptability characteristic of the sage who lives on *piṇḍapāta*, or alms-food, is highlighted in the following verse:

*Alatthaṃ yadidaṃ sādhu,
nālatthaṃ kusalāṃ iti,
ubhayeneva so tādī,
rukkaṃ va upanivattati.*²¹

"Suppose I got it, well and good,
Suppose I didn't get, that's fine too,
In both circumstances he is such,
And comes back [like one who walks up to a] tree."

This kind of adaptability and resilience is also implied by the term *tādī*. Though the term is sometimes rendered by the word "steadfast", it does not stand for any rigidity. Instead, it carries implications of a non-rigid resilience.

This is a wonderful quality in *Tathāgatas* and *arahants*. We may compare it to a revolving swing in a children's playground. One who is seated in a revolving swing has nothing to get upset about falling headlong when the swing goes up. The seats are hung in such a way that they also turn with the revolving motion of the swing. Had they been rigidly fixed, one seated there would fall off the seat when it goes up. It is that kind of resilience that is characteristic of the quality of *tādītā*, or "suchness". This is how we have to understand the famous lines in the *Mahāmaṅgalasutta*.

*Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi,
cittam yassa na kampati,*²²

"Whose mind remains unshaken,
When touched by worldly vicissitudes."

This quality of being unshaken, this immovability, is the result of not grasping. It comes when there is no tenacious clinging. It is to one who rests on or leans on something that there is dislodgement or instability.

Now I am leaning on the wall, if someone does damage to the wall, I would get shaken. That is what is suggested by the axiom *nissitassa calitaṃ, anissitassa calitaṃ n'atthi*, "to one who is attached, there is dislodgement, to the one detached, there is no dislodgement".²³ The worldling, on the other hand, thinks that to lean on or to rely on something is the mark of stability.

So it seems that the term *tādī* has an extraordinary dimension of

meaning. In this particular context, however, the suchness spoken of does not concern the eight worldly vicissitudes like gain and loss. Here it carries a special nuance as is evident from the statement:

Iti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato diṭṭha-suta-muta-viññātabbesu dhammesu tādī yeva tādī. "Thus, monks, the *Tathāgata*, being such in regard to all phenomena, seen, heard, sensed and cognized, is such."

The suchness here meant is about the views adhered to by the worldlings. In regard to things seen, heard, sensed and cognized, the worldlings go on asserting dogmatically *idam eva saccaṃ, mogham aññaṃ*, "this alone is true, all else is false". But the *Tathāgata* has no such dogmatic involvement. He only analytically exposes them for what they are.

As we tried to illustrate by the simile of the dog on the plank, the *Tathāgata* simply penetrates into their dependently arisen nature and declares that all those views are dependent on contact, *phassapaccayā*. That is the *tādī* quality meant here. If we are to understand the plane of suchness, *tādībhūmi*, in a deeper sense, this is how we have to appreciate its significance. Now we come to the couplet forming the grand finale to the *Kālakārāmasutta*.

*Yaṃ kiñci diṭṭhaṃ va suttaṃ mutaṃ vā,
ajjhositāṃ saccamutaṃ paresaṃ,
na tesu tādī sayasaṃvutesu,
saccaṃ musā vā pi paraṃ daheyyaṃ.*

*Etañca sallaṃ paṭigacca disvā,
ajjhositā yattha pajā visattā,
jānāmi passāmi tath' eva etaṃ,
ajjhositaṃ n' atthi tathāgatānaṃ.*

In the first verse, we have the difficult term *sayasaṃvutesu*, which we rendered by "amidst those who are entrenched in their own views". The term carries insinuations of philosophical in-breeding, which often accounts for dogmatic adherence to views. The *Tathāgata* declares that he does not hold as true or false any of the concepts of individual truths based on what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized by others, because of his suchness. Being such, he does not categorically label any of those views as true or false. He penetrates into and analyses the psychological back-

ground of all those dogmatic views and understands them as such.

In the final verse, he declares that he has seen well in advance "the barb on which mankind is hooked impaled". The barb is none other than the dogmatic assertion, 'I know, I see, it is verily so'. Having seen this barb, well in advance, the *Tathāgata* entertains no dogmatic involvement of that sort.

The precise meaning of some words and phrases here is a matter of controversy. A discussion of them might throw more light on their deeper nuances. The most difficult term seems to be *sayasaṃvuta*. The commentary gives the following explanation:

'*Sayasamvutesu*'ti 'sayameva saṃvaritvā piyāyitvā gahitagahaṇesu diṭṭhigatikesū'ti attho. Diṭṭhigatikā hi 'sayam saṃvutā'ti vuccanti.²⁴ "*Sayasamvutesu* means among those dogmatic view-holders, who have grasped those views, having recollected them and cherished them. Dogmatic view-holders are called *sayasaṃvuta*."

According to the commentary, the term *sayasaṃvuta* refers to persons who hold dogmatic views. But we interpreted it as a reference to such views themselves.

By way of clarification, we may allude to some discourses in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*, which bring up a wealth of material to substantiate the salient points in the *Kālakārāmasutta*, while throwing more light on the particular term in question. The chapter called *Aṭṭhakavagga* in the *Suttanipāta* in particular embodies a deep analysis of the controversies among contemporary dogmatists.

Let us, first of all, take up for comment some verses that throw more light on the meaning of the term *sayasaṃvuta* from the *Cūḷaviyūhasutta*. That discourse unfolds itself in the form of question and answer. The commentary explains, that this medium of dialogue was adopted by the Buddha to resolve the clash of philosophical moot points current in the society, and that the interlocutor is a replica of the Buddha himself, created by his psychic power.²⁵ Be that as it may, the relevant question for the present context is presented as follows.

Kasmā nu saccāni vadanti nānā,
pavādiyāse kusalā vadānā,
saccāni su tāni bahūni nānā,

*udāhu te takkam anussaranti.*²⁶

"Why do they proclaim various truths,
Claiming to be experts each in his field,
Are there several and various truths,
Or do they merely follow logical consistency?"
The Buddha's reply to it is as follows.

*Na h'eva saccāni bahūni nānā,
aññatra saññāya niccāni loke,
takkañ ca diṭṭhīsu pakappayitvā,
'saccaṃ musā 'ti dvayadhammā āhu.*

"There are no several and various truths,
That are permanent in the world, apart from perception,
It is by manipulating logic in speculative views,
That they speak of two things called 'truth and falsehood'."

There is no plurality in the concept of truth, apart from the perception based on which they declare various speculative views. It seems that the Buddha grants the possibility of various levels of perception as a truth for all times, though he does not accept a plurality of truths, arising out of a variety of speculative views based on them.

He understands the psychology of logic, having seen penetratively the perceptual background of each and every view. He accepts as a psychological fact that such and such a perception could precipitate such and such a view. Therefore, in a limited or relative sense, they are 'true'.

The dichotomy between truth and falsehood has arisen in the world due to a manipulation of logic on individual viewpoints. This fact comes up for further comment in the *Mahāvīyūhasutta* that follows.

*Sakaṃ hi dhammaṃ paripuṇṇam āhu,
aññassa dhammaṃ pana hīnaṃ āhu,
evam pi viggayha vivādiyanti,
sakaṃ sakaṃ sammutim āhu saccaṃ.*²⁷

This verse describes how debating parties go on clashing with each other. They call their own system of thought perfect, and the other system of thought inferior. Thus they quarrel and dispute. Their own individual

viewpoint they assert as true. The phrase *sakaṃ sakaṃ sammutim*, "each his own viewpoint", is somewhat suggestive of *sayaṣaṃvutesu*, the problematic term in the *Kāḷakārāmasutta*.

Yet another verse from the *Pasūrasutta* in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* exposes the biases and prejudices underlying these individual truths.

*‘Idh’ eva suddhi’ iti vādiyanti,
nāññesu dhammesu visuddhim āhu,
yaṃ nissitā tattha subhaṃ vadānā,
paccekasaccesu puthū niviṭṭhā.²⁸*

"‘Here in this system is purity’, they assert polemically,
They are not prepared to grant purity in other systems of thought,
Whatever view they lean on, that they speak in praise of,
They are severally entrenched in their own individual truths."

The last line is particularly relevant, as it brings up the concept of *paccekasacca*. To be a *Paccekabuddha* means to be enlightened for oneself. So the term *paccekasacca* can mean "truth for oneself". Those who hold conflicting views go on debating entrenched each in his own concept of truth.

The three expressions *paccekasacca*, *sakaṃ sakaṃ sammutim* and *sayaṣaṃvutesu* convey more or less the same idea. The words *tesu sayaṣaṃvutesu* refer to those narrow viewpoints to which they are individually confined, or remain closeted in. The *Tathāgata* does not hold as true or false any of those views limited by the self-bias.

Another lapse in the commentary to the *Kāḷakārāmasutta* is its comment on the phrase *paraṃ daheyyaṃ*. It takes the word *paraṃ* in the sense of "supreme", *uttamaṃ katvā*, whereas in this context it means "the other". Here, too, we may count on the following two lines of the *Cūlaviyūhasutta* of the *Suttanipāta* in support of our interpretation.

*Yen’ eva ‘bālo ’ti paraṃ dahāti,
tenātumānaṃ ‘kusalo ’ti cāha.²⁹*

"That by which one dubs the other a fool,
By that itself one calls oneself an expert".

From this it is clear that the phrase *paraṃ dahāti* means "dubs another". The last two lines of the *Kāḷakārāmasutta* are of utmost impor-

tance.

*Jānāmi passāmi tath' eva etaṃ,
ajjhositā n' atthi tathāgatānaṃ.*

"I know I see, it is verily so,

No such clinging for the *Tathāgatas*."

Worldlings dogmatically grasp the data heaped up by their six sense-bases, but the *Tathāgatas* have no such entanglements in regard to sensory knowledge. Why so? It is because they have seen the cessation of the six sense-bases.

By way of illustration, we may compare this seeing of the cessation of the six sense-bases to an exposure of the inner mechanism of a high-speed engine by removing the bonnet. In the *Dvayamsutta*, from which we quoted in our last sermon, the Buddha showed us the functioning of the gigantic machine called the six-fold sense-base, its vibrations, revolutions, beats and running gears. The discourse analyses the mechanism in such words as.

*Cakkhu aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi. Rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino. Itthetaṃ dvayaṃ calañceva vyayañca aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi.*³⁰

"Eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is unstable, evanescent, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise."

The discourse proceeds in this vein and concludes with the words:

Phuṭṭho, bhikkhave, vedeti, phuṭṭho ceteti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti. Itthete pi dhammā calā ceva vayā ca aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.

"Contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one intends, contacted one perceives. Thus these things, too, are unstable, evanescent, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise."

The concluding reference is to the products of the six sense-bases. Feelings, intentions and perceptions, arising due to contact, are also unstable, evanescent, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise.

The sum total of percepts is indicated by the words *diṭṭha suta muta* and *viññāta*. The totality of percepts are made up or 'prepared', *saṅkhata*. The term *saṅkhata* has nuances suggestive of 'production'. If we take the six-fold sense-base as a high-speed machine, productive of perceptions,

the Buddha has revealed to us the workings of its intricate machinery. Each and every part of this machine is unstable, evanescent, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise.

The Buddha understood the made up or prepared nature, *saṅkhata*, of all these, as well as the preparations, *saṅkhārā*, that go into it. That is why the Buddha has no dogmatic involvement in regard to the products of this machine, the totality of all what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized, *diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*. None of them is substantial. They are essenceless and insubstantial. There is nothing worthwhile grasping here as apart from the activities or preparations that are dynamic in themselves.

So far we have tried to understand the state of affairs with reference to this discourse. But now let us take up a canonical simile that facilitates our understanding. The Buddha has compared consciousness to a magic show in the *Phenapiṇḍūpamasutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta* we had already cited.³¹

*Phenapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ,
vedanā bubbuḷūpamā,
marīcikūpamā saññā,
saṅkhārā kadalūpamā,
māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ,
dīpitādiccabandhunā.*

"Form is like a mass of foam,
And feeling but an airy bubble,
Perception is like a mirage,
And formations a banana trunk,
Consciousness is a magic show [a juggler's trick entire],
[All these similes] were made known by the kinsman of the sun."

As a matter of fact, the verse itself is a mnemonic summary of a certain sermon delivered by the Buddha. According to it, the Buddha, the kinsman of the sun, has compared form to a mass of foam, feeling to a water bubble, perception to a mirage, preparations to a banana trunk, and consciousness to a magic show.

What is of relevance to us here is the comparison of consciousness to a magic show. The simile of the magic show is presented in that *Sutta* in the

following words:

Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, màyākàro và màyākàrantevàsā và cātum-mahāpathe màyāü vidaüseyya. Tam enaü cakkhumà puriso passeyya nijjhāyeyya yoniso upaparikkheyya. Tassa taü passato nijjhāyato yoniso upaparikkhato rittakamāeva khāyeyya tucchakamāeva khāyeyya asārakamāeva khāyeyya. Kiñhi siyà, bhikkhave, màyāya sàro?

Evam eva kho, bhikkhave, yaü kiñci viññāḍāü atātànāgatapac-cuppannāü, ajjhattaü và bahiddhà và, oëàrikaü và sukhumaü và, hānaü và paḍātaü và, yaü dāre santike và, taü bhikkhu passati nijjhāyati yoniso upaparikkhati. Tassa taü passato nijjhāyato yoniso upaparikkhato rittakamāeva khāyati tucchakamāeva khāyati asārakamāeva khāyati. Kiñhi siyà, bhikkhave, viññāḍe sàro?

"Suppose, monks, a magician or a magician's apprentice should hold a magic show at the four cross-roads and a keen-sighted man should see it, ponder over it and reflect on it radically. Even as he sees it, ponders over it and reflects on it radically, he would find it empty, he would find it hollow, he would find it void of essence. What essence, monks, could there be in a magic show?

Even so, monks, whatever consciousness, be it past, future or present, in oneself or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, a

1. MI436, *MahāMālunkyasutta*.
2. A II 25, *Kāḷakārāmasutta*.
3. Sn 908, *MahāViyūhasutta*.
4. See esp. sermon 20.
5. E.g. at MI484, *Aggīvacchagottasutta*.
6. See sermon 24.
7. E.g. at MI484, *Aggīvacchagottasutta*.
8. D I 58, *Sāmaññaphalasutta*.
9. Mp III 38.
10. Mp III 39.
11. See sermon 15.
12. Ud 8, *Bāhiyasutta*.
13. See sermon 6.
14. D I 42, *Brahmajālasutta*.
15. E.g. M I 111, *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*.
16. Ud 8, *Bāhiyasutta*.
17. Mp III 40.
18. A IV 157, *Paṭhamalokadhammasutta*.
19. Nid II 459.
20. See sermon 21.
21. Sn 712, *Nālakasutta*.
22. Sn 268, *Mahāmaṅgalasutta*.
23. Ud 81, *Catutthanibbānapaṭisaṃyuttasutta*.
24. Mp III 41.
25. Pj II 554
26. Sn 885, *CūḷaViyūhasutta*.
27. Sn 905, *MahāViyūhasutta*.
28. Sn 824, *Pasūrasutta*.
29. Sn 888, *CūḷaViyūhasutta*.
30. S IV 67, *Dutiyadvayamsutta*.
31. S III 142, *Pheṇapiṇḍūpamasutta*, see sermon 11

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