Paticca Samuppada Sermon 2

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 184)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Kuto sarā nivattanti

kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

ato sarā nivattanti

ettha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

ettha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

– Sara Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S.

Wherefrom do currents turn back

Where whirls no more the whirlpool

Wherein does name and form

Get cut off with no trace left

Where water, earth, fire and air

Are unplumbed and find no footing

Herefrom do currents turn back

Here whirls no more the whirlpool

Here it is that name and form

Get held in check with no trace left

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha made known to the world that *Saṁsāric* existence is a cyclic process in that it is a going the same round again and again. That indeed is the true meaning of the term '*saṁsāra vaṭṭa*'. The two significant words '*saṁsarana*' and '*nissaraṇa*' are also suggestive of a going round and an exit from the vicious circle – the release. When one keeps going round and round for an inconceivably long period of time, one tends to build up a tension or an impulse to continue the process. That is what makes it extremely difficult to get out of the cyclic process. What the Fully Enlightened One proclaimed to the world through the Law of Dependent Arising is the cause of this cyclic process and the way of getting out of it.

The two verses we have taken up as the topic of our sermon today, also deals with these two aspects of running round (*saṁsarana*) and exit from the round – the centripetal and the centrifugal aspects. These two verses are found in the *Devatā Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya.* The first verse embodies a deep Dhamma question raised by a deity in the Buddha's presence. The second verse has the Buddha's answer to it. Let us try to get a general idea of the meaning of the two verses.

Kuto sarā nivattanti

kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

From where do currents turn back? Where does the whirlpool not whirl?

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

Where does name-and-form get cut off without residue?

This is the question posed by the deity, and here is the Buddha's reply:

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

Where water and earth, fire and air find no footing.

ato sarā nivattanti

It is from there that currents turn back.

ettha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

It is here that the whirlpool does not whirl.

ettha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati

It is here that name and form get cut off without residue.

You all might have understood that these are two riddle verses. It seems the most important word in the two verses is '*vaṭṭa*' – 'round'. The word '*vaṭṭa*' also has the sense of turning round or going round. Here the turning round is that of water currents. That is why we brought up a simile of a vortex in our explanation of the Law of Dependent Arising. It is not something contrary to the Buddha's teaching. But unfortunately, if you look up the standard Canonical translations in Sinhala for the meaning of this riddle verse, you will find something like this:

'*Kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati*' – 'Where does Saṁsāric rain not rain?' This talk about rain obfuscates a deep aspect of the Law of Dependent Arising. On this subject, we have spoken a lot in our sermons. In our last sermon too, we referred to the simile of the vortex. Today, I shall explain it in detail.

Let us try to understand how a whirlpool or a vortex comes to be formed. The mainstream of water in a river usually flows downwards. But some runaway current of water, rather pervertly or arbitrarily tries to run against the mainstream. It is trying to do something impossible. So after going a little way, it clashes with the mainstream, gets thrown off, turns round and pushed on by the mainstream, makes a vain attempt to go forward. Due to this vain attempt, which every time gets foiled, a whirlpool or a vortex is formed with the passage of time. As if because it fails to go forward, it starts moving downward in a revolving fashion due to the resulting tension. It goes on digging towards the bottom deeper and deeper until an abyss is formed. As you know, where there is a whirlpool, there is an abyss. Along with the formation of an abyss, something else happens. A vacuum is created on the surface water by the funnel-like churning motion downward. To fill this vacuum the whirlpool develops a dangerous power of attraction. That is why a swimmer is always apprehensive of a whirlpool. It attracts whatever that comes within its orbit. This power of attraction is comparable to grasping (*upādāna*) if the vacuum it tries to fill is craving (*taṇhā*). This peculiar behavior of a whirlpool makes it a centre of activity – a Unit. Wherever there is a whirlpool in a river, one can point it out as a 'here' and a 'there'.

If we take this whirlpool or vortex in a metaphorical sense, we can interpret its formation this way:

The nature of the world is impermanence. But beings have in them four perversions:

1. Perception of permanence in the impermanent
2. Perception of beauty in the repulsive
3. Perception of happiness in the painful
4. Perception of self in the not-self.

Because of the ignorance (*avijjā*) represented by the four perversions, some impelling force of preparations (*saṅkhārā*) moves forward. Where it fails to go forward, it turns round and as we have already explained, gives rise to a whirlpool or vortex. It is the preparations that sustain the vortex.

So then the role of ignorance and preparations can explain the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form, which we compared to a vortex. Very often, we had to point out that name-and-form has to be understood differently and not as it is explained nowadays. To put it briefly – 'name' in name-andform is only a formal name and 'form' in name-and-form is

only a nominal form. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the factors on the mental side with which the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air are recognized. That is why they are collectively called name. By that recognition, a 'perception of form' comes up, which in effect is a form only in name. So this vortex is something spurious. In fact, even the term '*saṅkhārā*' has connotations of spuriousness or deceptiveness, as for instance in its association with the drama. The motive force of preparations aroused by ignorance keeps up the vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form. In our last sermon, we pointed out with illustrations like the chess game and the dog on the plank, how the activity of the vortex gives rise to a duality which sustains the illusion of existence. In short, the vortex gives a perverted notion of an actual existence. That is what we meant by a 'here' and a 'there' giving a false impression of existence in a flowing river. Through those similes, we tried to present the basic facts underlying the Law of Dependent Arising.

In drawing out the implications of this simile further, let us not forget that the Buddha compared consciousness to a magical illusion. Consciousness has the quality of reflection as in the case of water. Because of its quality of reflection, name and form are reflected on it. The world takes it to be real. Mistaking it to be an actual name and an actual form is the beginning of all the confusion. We described this bifurcation into two sides as a competition with the chess game and the cricket match as illustrations. As a simple illustration, we gave the simile of the dog on the plank which it seems, has now become popular among preachers.

More recently, we gave another simile which many would relish. It is about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus borrowed from Greek literature. Narcissus had never seen his own face. One day while wandering in a forest, he bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing his own face as a reflection, he imagined an angel in the water and tried to embrace her. Because of the ripples, he kept on repeating his vain attempt and finally pined away and died. We gave this simile to show that the interplay between consciousness and name-and-form is something similar.

Then how can one liberate oneself from this predicament? That is the problem before us now. This is not a problem we have introduced ourselves. There are a number of discourses preached by the Buddha himself which mention this inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form (*aññamañña paccayatā* – mutual conditionality). The way of freedom from this vortex is clearly portrayed in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta.* In that discourse our Buddha relates how Vipassi Buddha in the distant past attained Buddhahood. He did not go through a period of rigorous austerities like our Gotama Buddha. Instead, when the time was ripe for his attainment, he used radical attention to understand by stages the Law of Dependent Arising. Starting from the very end, he went on tracing the causes for existence until he came to the mutual conditionality between consciousness and name-andform. Briefly stated, his way of attending proceeded as follows:

'Given what, does decay and death come to be? Conditioned by what is decay and death?'

As you all know, decay and death is the last among the twelve links. This is the way of radical attention or '*yonisomanasikāra*'. The meaning of the term '*yonisomanasikāra*' should be properly understood. To analyze the word:

'*yoni*' means the matrix or the place of origin. So '*yonisomanasikāra*' is attention by way of the matrix – the point of origin. In short, it means reflection as to the causes and conditions. First of all, he thought:

'When what is there does decay and death come to be? Dependent on what is decay and death? Then it occurred to him:

'When birth is there, decay and death comes to be. Dependent on birth is decay and death.'

In the same way, he directed radical attention further and thought:

'When what is there does birth come to be? Dependent on what is birth? When existence is there does birth come to be. Dependent on existence is birth.' This is because birth is the beginning of existence. Only when there is a concept of existence, can there be a concept of birth. Then he thought:

'Given what does existence come to be? Dependent on what is existence?' And he understood:

Given grasping does existence come to be, dependent on grasping is existence.

Going by the same mode of radical attention, he thought of the condition for grasping and found craving and likewise the condition of craving to be feeling, condition of feeling to be contact, condition for contact to be the six sense-spheres. What is called six sense-spheres is sometimes spoken of as twelve spheres. Then one has to understand by it the six internal spheres, that is the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind and the six external spheres, that is the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. Taken as pairs, they are the six spheres of sense. It is because of these spheres that contact comes to be. Then he thought:

'What being there does the sixfold sense-sphere come to be? What is the condition for the sixfold sense-sphere?' It occurred to him then:

'When name-andform is there does the six-fold sense-sphere come to be. Nameand-form is the condition for the six-fold sense-sphere.' Going further, he thought:

'What being there does name-and-form come to be? What is the condition for name-and-form?' He understood that it is when consciousness is there that name-and-form comes to be, that consciousness is the condition for name-and-form. Then he pondered:

'What being there does consciousness come to be? What is the condition for consciousness?' He realized that it is when name-and-form is there that consciousness comes to be, that name-and-form is the condition for consciousness. With that he was convinced of the inter dependence of these two links.

It is said that at this point it occurred to the Bodhisatta Vipassi:

'Paccudāvattati kho idaṁ viññāṇaṁ nāmarūpamhā. nāparaṁ gacchati.'

'This consciousness turns back from name-and-form. It does not go to another.'

This is how he aroused the knowledge of the arising nature of things. On reaching that point in his radical attention, it occurred to him:

This consciousness does not go beyond name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form is consciousness and dependent on consciousness is name-and-form. From there he reflected back:

Dependent on name-and-form is six sense-spheres, dependent on six sense-spheres contact, dependent on contact, feeling, dependent on feeling, craving and so on ending with the conclusion:

This is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. This, then, is the arising aspect of suffering. With that understanding, it is said, that the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed:

'*Samudayo, samudayo*'

'Arising, arising'

At this juncture, the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have made an utterance of joy as we get in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in the case of our Gotama Buddha.

'*Cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi*'

'The eye arose, the knowledge arose, the wisdom arose, the science arose, the light arose.'

That is as regards the arising aspect.

Along with it, the Bodhisatta Vipassi attended to the cessation aspect and that too starting from the end.

'When what does not exist does decay and death not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of decay and death come about? And he understood:

'When there is no birth, decay and death does not come to be; with the cessation of birth comes cessation of decay and death.' I hope you all can understand the reverse order in the same way. 'When what does not exist does birth not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of birth come about? When there is no existence, birth does not come to be; with the cessation of existence comes cessation of birth. Likewise, when grasping ceases existence or becoming would cease. When craving ceases, grasping would cease. When feeling ceases, craving would cease. When contact ceases, feeling would cease. When the six sensespheres cease, contact would cease. When name-and-form ceases, the six sense-spheres would cease. When consciousness ceases, name-and-form would cease. When name-and-form ceases, consciousness would cease. With this, again, he reached the point at which the inter-relation between consciousness and name-andform became obvious. Then the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have uttered this highly significant statement.

'*Adhigato kho myāyaṁ vipassanā maggo bodhāya*.'

'The way of insight to awakening has been aroused by me.'

This clearly indicates that the Law of Dependent Arising which in our tradition has been almost relegated to the limbo is directly relevant to meditation and helpful for enlightenment.

After understanding the cessation aspect, the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed that the way of insight has been aroused because it is the decisive aspect in regard to insight. The reason is that along with the cessation of name-and-form, the six sensespheres cease and with that contact, feeling and craving also cease. Thus the entire mass of suffering comes to cease. What comes after this is only the following information:

The Bodhisatta Vipassi, with the help of this mode of insight reflected on the rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping as follows:

> Thus is form, thus its arising, thus its passing away.
>
> Thus is feeling, thus its arising, thus its passing away.
>
> Thus is perception, thus its arising, thus its passing away.
>
> Thus are preparations, thus their arising, thus their passing away.
>
> Thus is consciousness, thus its arising, thus its passing away.
>
> Finally, it is said that having contemplated on the rise and fall of the five aggregates, before long, he attained Enlightenment.

We can form some idea of the way of reflection in insight meditation by this account. What is meant by the contemplation of the rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) is the contemplation of the arising and ceasing nature of phenomena. In contemplating on arising and ceasing, the question of causes and conditions comes up as a matter of course. As we mentioned the other day, according to discourses like *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta,* the cause and condition for form is the four great primaries, namely, earth, water, fire and air. The cause and condition for feeling is contact. The cause and condition for perception is contact. The cause and condition for preparations is contact. But the cause and condition for consciousness is name-and-form. We can infer that the Bodhisatta Vipassi in his contemplation of rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping, reflected lastly on consciousness and thereby became acquainted with name-and-form. As the radical attention on name-and-form became sharper and sharper, he realized the cessation of preparations and attained enlightenment.

From our analysis of this discourse, it should be obvious how important the Law of Dependent Arising is. Generally, we talk only about the Four Noble Truths. But from this episode, it is clear that when one examines the causes and conditions of consciousness, one would hit upon name-and-form. Let me elaborate a little on this point. However much we explain, it seems there are many who cannot budge an inch from the traditional interpretation. So often, I have pointed out with special reference to the Buddha's own definition found in the discourses that the factors on the 'name' side in name-and-form are feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. It is with the help of these five that we recognize the four elements, earth, water, fire and air in terms of hard and soft, hot or cold, and so forth. That is why it is called *rūpasaññā* (perception of form). Those five factors are called name only in a formal sense. Primarily, recognition is not by 'name' in the conventional and linguistic sense. But by means of feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Some confuse the issue by arguing that contact has to precede feeling. However much we point out with quotations, they insist on putting contact first. Let me explain it in such a way that at least you all would not forget.

Please stretch your right hand if you can. Now stretch out the fingers. I am going to give you an exercise to drive out sleepiness if any. Now stretch your palm. Alright, start counting your fingers. 'One', what is the finger you bend? Is it the thumb?

Isn't it the little finger? This is how I call the small but mischievous little finger – 'Feeling'. Then comes number Two – the ring finger where you wear the signet ring. Well, call it 'Perception'. Now for number Three. Bend the decisive middle finger, prominent and intrusive. See how it digs into your palm. Let us call it 'Intention'. He is the one who calls the waiter and silences a meeting. You do your work when 'intention' steps in. Number Four is the index finger, fussy and busy all the time. You may dub it 'Contact'. What comes last as Number five? The THUMB – 'standing apart but approachable to the rest' as lexicons define it. Take it as 'Attention'. So have this 'at your finger tips', this definition of 'Name'. When you clutch your fingers, the one nearest to your thumb (that is Attention) is the index finger (that is CONTACT). Well, that is why I prefer the original sutta definition of '*nāma'*. Of course, these similes are not found in the discourse. I brought these up only for clarification. Now, after this, at least you all, dear listeners, must not doubt the Buddha-word regarding '*nāma*' in '*nāmarūpa*'.

To impress you further on this point, let me say something more. There may be in this audience lawyers and other knowledgeable persons who know more about legal matters. I have heard that there is provision for such a tactic as this in legal affairs. Sometimes a case of murder or theft comes up in the law courts with no one to give evidence. When there is no evidence, the accused has to be discharged. In such circumstances our legal system has provision for a tactic like this. Suppose there are five persons accused in a case of planned theft of a very serious type. But no one comes forward to give evidence. In such a situation, the judge can give pardon to one of the alleged culprits under the oath:

"You must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Thereby that culprit is persuaded to give evidence holding nothing back. Now mind you, the Buddha himself resorted to such a "middle path" tactic.

The magical illusion of consciousness is an insoluable problem. This problem, which no one in the world not even the seers, could solve, the Buddha successfully solved through his 'Middle Path'. It is to illustrate this mode of solution that I employ this simile. I don't know much about law, but this much I know. So let me explain now. We identified THUMB with ATTENTION. He is the guy, who in the guise of non-radical attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) led us up the garden path and brought us all this long way in *Saṁsāra*. He has dubious relations with the little finger (feeling), the ring finger (perception), with the middle finger (intention) and above all, with the index finger (contact). As a matter of fact, he is closely associated with the fussy and busy index-finger. The Buddha understood that out of the whole 'bunch', the biggest even in size is the THUMB (Attention). He is the guy who as 'non-radical attention' planned the whole crime. So what did the Buddha do? He converted 'nonradical attention' into 'radical attention' insisting on the confession of 'the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth'. That is how the Buddha adjudicated this mysterious case of consciousness.

To put all this in a nutshell, let us go back to 'the-dog-onthe-plank'. That dog keeps on looking down into the water because of non-radical attention. If it suddenly understands "It is not that, I look because I see, but that I see because I look, it will no longer go on looking."

Then there is the story of Narcissus we have cited in our books. In fact, we gave a revised version of that story about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus. In the original story, it is said that he fell in love with the reflection of his own face in the pond, mistaking it to be an angel's, and sacrificed his life for the imagined angel and that a flower nearby his dead body was named after him. That was all. But we revised the story and made a 'Buddhist version' of it. We 'resurrected' the youth and got him to realize the fact that it is his own reflection that he is in love with – that he is 'seeing' because he 'looks'. But this is only our 'post-script' to the story. If that youth had actually aroused that radical attention, he could have become a Stream-winner. Well, all this is to show that attention is the most important factor. That is why, with the change from non-radical attention to radical attention, everything became clear to the Buddha.

Let us pass on to another story. Some of you might not like those Greek stories. Well, we have our *Jātaka* stories. Among the *Jātaka* stories there is one called *Ummagga Jātaka* – a fairly long story. There we have an interesting and instructive story titled 'The gem problem'. I shall try to relate it in brief.

'King Vedeha of *Mithilā* was informed that there is a gem in the pond by the city gate. The king asked his senior-most advisor Senaka to procure it. He went there and looked into the pond. True enough there was a gem, so he got the people to empty the pond to get it. But they couldn't find the gem. Then he ordered them to dig out the mud but all in vain. However when the pond got filled again, the elusive gem was still there. Again and again he got the people to empty the pond but no one could trace it. At last, he reported the matter to the king who then entrusted that duty to his youngest advisor Bodhisatta Mahosadha. Wise as he was, Mahosadha, as soon as he looked into the pond, understood that it is only a reflection and that the gem must be in the crow's nest on the palm tree by the pond. In the presence of the king who also came there, he got a bowl full of water immersed into the pond. A gem was visible there too.

"Where then is the gem?" asked the king.

"It is in the crow's nest up there, Lord", replied Mahosadha and got it down for the king.'

So this is a good illustration for non-radical attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*). Senaka imagined a gem in the pond and dug out the mud. To Bodhisatta Mahosadha's wisdom-eye, it appeared only as a reflection on water. By the way, there is a certain detail in this episode, which, curiously enough, has a deeper dimension. As you may remember, in the two verses that formed the topic of our sermon, there was the question:

Wherefrom do currents turn back

Where whirls no more the whirlpool

Wherein does name and form

Get cut off with no trace left

And what was the Buddha's answer?

Where water, earth, fire and air

Are unplumbed and get no footing

Herefrom do currents turn back

Here whirls no more the whirlpool

Here it is that name and form

Get held in check with no trace left

Now what does this mean?

Where the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air – do not get a footing, that is to say, do not get established, it is from there that the currents turn back. So far in our commentarial tradition, no one could understand the import of the riddle verse and the Buddha's answer to it. Even from the episode we have just related, you can get a clue to it. According to Senaka's 'sight', there was a gem in the pond. Therefore, a gem got established in earth, water, fire and air. But to Mahosadha's 'insight', it appeared merely as a reflection. So there was no need to dig into the pond to find it. Now from that point onwards, let me sidetrack to another discourse which is also relevant to our topic. It is the *Kevaḍḍha Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

It is an extremely deep sutta which has puzzled many a scholar. It embodies a wonderful episode which the Buddha relates to a certain householder. According to it, a certain monk whose name is not given conceived a problem which is of the type that modern scientists are concerned with. 'Where do these four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?' He seems to have thought that there must be some place where they completely cease. He did not approach the Buddha to get an answer. Instead, because he had developed psychic powers, went from heaven to heaven seeking an answer to his problem from the gods. They said:

"We do not know. Go and ask those in higher heavens. Passing from heaven to heaven and from Brahma world to Brahma world, finally he put his question to Mahā Brahmā. He was shy to confess his ignorance in the company of Brahmas. So he cautioned that monk to a side and confided:

"I myself do not know the answer. But why did you come all this way? You should have asked the Buddha himself."

Then that monk came back to the Buddha and posed his question:

"Where do those four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?"

The Buddha, however, instead of answering the question as it is, remarked:

"Monk, that is not the way you should put the question. This is how you should word it:

Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati

kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati.

'Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing,

Where do long and short – subtle and gross, comely and ugly,

And name and form – get held in check with no trace left?'

First of all, let us try to understand the significance of the Buddha's reformulation of the question.

'Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati'

Here too we have the word '*gādhati*' ('to find a footing'). 'Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing?' It is not a question of destruction or complete cessation, but a case of getting not established by 'not finding a footing'. Then there are these significant words too.

'kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati.'

Where do (the distinctions like) long and short, subtle and gross, comely and ugly, and name and form get held in check with no trace left. Instead of the word '*nirujjhati*' (ceases) in the original question, the Buddha introduced the significant word '*uparujjhati*' ('to hold in check'). After reformulating that monk's question in this way, the Buddha gave the following answer which, for a long time, has puzzled the scholars:

viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ

anantaṁ sabbatopabhaṁ

ettha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

ettha dīghañca rassañca

aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

ettha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

viññāṇassa nirodhena

etthetaṁ uparujjhati

Consciousness which is non-manifestative

Endless lustrous on all sides

Here it is that water and earth

Fire and air no footing find

Here again is long and short

Subtle and gross, comely and ugly

Here is name as well as form

Are held in check with no trace left

Wherein consciousness comes to cease

All these are held in check therein

Now let us attempt a solution to this longstanding puzzle. The Buddha is declaring that there is something called '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – 'non-manifestative consciousness'. Since we have already told you about the 'Elusive Gem', you can easily guess what '*anidassana*' means. Or else, from the Narcissus story, you can get a clue to the meaning of the term '*anidassana*' (non-manifestative). For Narcissus, deluded as he was, the water in the pond manifested an angel. Had wisdom dawned on him, the manifestation – the angel – would be no more. Consciousness of an angel would have ceased. So also is the case with the Gemin-the-pond, King Vedeha as well as Senaka had a consciousness of a gem. After Bodhisatta Mahosadha dispelled the delusion, their consciousness ceased to manifest a gem, and along with that distinctions, based on earth, water, fire, air, long and short, comely and ugly, relating to the reflection of the gem were gone.

So then this is the meaning of the phrase '*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*'. What is it that the non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest? Whatever that has to do with the perception of form. Thereby the significance of the pairs of words the Buddha tagged on to that monk's question would also become clear.

'*…dīghañca rassañca aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ*'

'Long and short, subtle-gross, comely-ugly'

All these distinctions are part and parcel with the perception of form. Finally, it is said that name-and-form are held in check without residue. That is by way of summary.

But then, what is the meaning of the last two lines?

'*viññāṇssa nirodhena – etthetaṁ uparujjhati*'

'With the cessation of consciousness, all these are held in check.'

What is meant is the cessation of the '*abhisaṅkhataviññāṇa*' ('the specifically prepared consciousness'). In other words, it is the deluded consciousness (e.g., the 'gemconsciousness' or the 'angel-consciousness').

Whatever pertains to the '*abhisaṅkhata-viññāṇa*' comes to cease in that all lustrous consciousness (*sabbatopabhaviññāṇa*). When light comes from all directions, consciousness becomes non-manifestative ('*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ anantaṁ sabbatopabhaṁ*').

Let us go back to our simile of the film-show. When a beautiful film-star appears on the screen, one might be tempted to go and embrace her, like Narcissus. The unreality of all what appears on the screen is understood when the cinema hall is fully illuminated. Only the screen is there. The scenes are gone. When Bodhisatta Mahosadha 'enlightened' them on the point, the King and

Senaka understood that there is no gem in the water. All these are clues to the meaning of the phrase '*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*'. Consciousness becomes 'non-manifestative' when it is endless and lustrous on all sides. What is the lustre? Wisdom is the lustre. We have pointed this out on many occasions. Some people seem to think that the Buddha compared wisdom to a lustre or light only in a metaphorical sense. But that is not so. The Buddha's sermon on lustres (*pabhā*) is a very powerful one.

'*Catasso imā bhikkhave pabhā. Katamā catasso?*

Candappabhā, suriyappabhā, aggippabhā paññāpabhā.

Imā kho bhikkhave catasso pabhā.

Etadaggaṁ bhikkhave imāsaṁ catunnaṁ

yadidaṁ paññāpabhā'

'Monks, there are these four lustres. What four? The lustre of the moon, the lustre of the sun, the lustre of the fire, the lustre of wisdom. These, monks, are the four lustres. Of these four, monks, this is the highest, namely, the lustre of wisdom.'

All this time people took this declaration lightly. It is through this lustre of wisdom that this illusory magic show is exposed for what it is. If name in name-and-form is formal name and form in name-and-form is nominal form, it is dependent on such a spurious name-and-form that the six-fold sense-sphere bifurcates into two teams – eye and forms, ear and sounds etc. and then, it is as a result of the interplay between these two teams that we get a world. That is why the Buddha defined the world in terms of the six sense-spheres. The entire world is to be found within this duality. Last of all comes the duality of mind and mind-object. It is within this world of the six-fold sense-sphere that all those 'things' that we take seriously, cease. Some people are scared of the word '*suññatā*' (voidness). But one cannot help it. That is why the Buddha compared it to an awakening from a dream. The worldlings are in a dream world. If things seen in a dream are no longer there when one wakes up, there is no point in lamenting. Things non-existing are seen as non-existing. That is the 'knowledge-of-things-as-they-are' (*yathābhūtañāṇa*). The Truth came to light in the light of wisdom.

Regarding name-and-form, there are many significant references well worth quoting. For instance, there are these two lines which convey something deep:

'*Taṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ asajjamānaṁ*

akiñcanaṁ nānupatanti dukkhā'

'That one untrammeled by name-and-form

And possessionless – no pains befall'

Not to get entangled in name-and-form is equivalent to owning nothing. Then there is nothing to get attached to. There is also this revealing declaration:

‘*Anattani attamāniṁ*

passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ

idaṁ saccanti maññati’

‘Behold the world with all its gods

Fancying a self where none exists

Entrenched in name-and-form it builds

The conceit:

‘This is the truth.’

Like Narcissus, like Senaka, the world has got entrenched in name-and-form. That is what the Buddha is pointing out to us. The lustre or light we spoke about is not like any form of light known to modern science. It is within this darkness, then, that the forms we see with our eyes and take to be real exist. That is why the Buddha compared all perceptions to a mirage.

Let me say something more to the same effect. There is an important discourse on duality we had discussed earlier too. It centres round the following highly significant verse:

‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna*

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

so‘dha sibbanimaccagā’

This verse, actually found in the *Tissametteyya Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* is so deep in meaning that, according to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, already during the Buddha’s life time, monks cited it and gave six different interpretations to it in a sort of symposium.

Rendered simply, the verse conveys the following idea:

‘Whoever, having known both ends, with wisdom, gets not attached to the middle, him do I call a Great Man. It is he who has gone beyond the seamstress.’

We have given a long commentary to this verse already.

Out of the six interpretations, two are relevant to our topic today. So we shall limit our discussion to those two. The common feature in all the six interpretations is the positing of two things as the two ends with something at the middle. The two ends are supposed to be stitched up ignoring the middle by a seamstress.

In one of the two interpretations we propose to discuss, one end is '*nāma*' (name), the second end is '*rūpa*' (form) and the middle is '*viññāṇa*' (consciousness). Just see, many scholars in defining '*nāma*' insist on including consciousness also in it. It is utterly wrong. The analysis of '*nāmarūpa*' in our commentarial tradition is contrary to the Law of Dependent Arising. Here it is clearly stated that 'name' is one end and 'form' is the other end and that 'consciousness' is in the middle. Craving is the seamstress. What does she do? She ignores the existence of consciousness in the middle and stitches up name and form, making one forget that the very distinction between name and form is due to consciousness. All this shows what a deep understanding those monks had even about one verse where present day scholars get stuck. Six monks gave six different interpretations to the same verse and the Buddha ratified all of them, specifying, however, that he himself had the first interpretation in mind when he uttered that verse. It seems that all the six interpretations are topics of meditation. So now we have dealt with one of them.

Well, there is another meditation topic like that. Only these two we are mentioning, as they are relevant to our theme. According to this particular interpretation, one end is the six internal sense-spheres. The second end is the six external sensespheres. As we have already explained the six internal spheres are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. The six external spheres are their objects, the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. They are on either side and again consciousness is in the middle. But craving puts the knot. Just as in the case of name and form, craving stitches them up into a knot ignoring consciousness. So also in the case of the sense-spheres, for instance, eye and forms are separated and craving, the seamstress, stitches them up ignoring consciousness which is in the middle.

Sometimes the difference between consciousness and wisdom is pointed out in the discourses. Their respective functions are also clarified. One such clarification is:

' . . . . *paññā bhāvetabbā – viññāṇaṁ pariññeyyaṁ*'

' . . . . wisdom is to be developed – consciousness is to be comprehended.'

In fact the development of wisdom is for the purpose of comprehension of consciousness. As wisdom develops, the nature of consciousness is understood. Now, what does this mean? To understand the nature of a magic show as it is, is to be free from its spell. That is 'the end' of the magic show. It is the same with the delusion about the cinema-screen or the T.V. screen. When wisdom comes up, consciousness goes down. That is the implication of the phrase '*viññāṇassa nirodhena*'– 'with the cessation of consciousness'. Now you can understand what the cessation is. It is like the cessation of the 'angel-consciousness' of Narcissus and the 'gem-consciousness' of Senaka.

That monk thought that there is some place where the four great primaries cease completely. The Buddha, however, held that what matters is the perception of form derived from the four great primaries – that it is a case of grasping (*upādāna*). It is not a destruction of the four great primaries. If one takes '*rūpa*' in the materialistic sense, like modern scientists, one cannot understand the deeper implications of these verses. What we have before us is a question of release from this vortical interplay – from the meaningless running in the same circle.

Between name-and-form and consciousness, worldlings keep running round and round in vain. We spoke about an abyss. You can understand this abyss in relation to the whirlpool we have described. It is to fill the vacuum arising out of the abyss that craving and grasping step in with the result the Five Aggregates get accumulated. That is like the flotsam and jetsam that the abyss attracts and engulfs. All these implications go with our simile of the vortex. But if one interprets the term 'vortex' as rain, all these deep meanings have no place. The point at which the currents turn back is the full understanding of the vortex. With that, the whirlpool of that individual 'whirls no more'. He cannot be traced anymore. The whirlpool or the vortex of the Arahant has ceased. But there is nothing to lament. The whirlpool was in the water. The mainstream too is a body of water. So what has actually ceased is only a pervert notion of existence.

Just see, when we interpret these verses in this way, there are some who call it nihilistic. Even the Buddha was branded a 'Nihilist' by the Brahamins. In the body of water flowing downwards, there was a pervert formation called a whirlpool or a vortex as a result of a runaway current. Even Buddhas and *Pacceka Buddhas* have been so many *Saṁsāric* runaway water currents. After a vain vortical interplay for aeons and aeons, if through wisdom their name-and-form comes to an end, currents will never flow for them again. You can now understand what sort of a deep Dhamma the Buddha has presented to us through this vortex simile. The delusion is seen through by the light of wisdom. That is the path of insight Bodhisatta Vipassi followed.

It was when the radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*) became razor-edge sharp that wisdom dawned on him. That is precisely why there is this significant phrase in that same discourse:

'*yonisomanasikārā ahu paññāya abhisamayo*'

'Through radical attention, there was the understanding through wisdom'

So then, radical attention is the seed of wisdom, and also its harbinger.

Well knowing this innate capacity of 'Attention'– the 'THUMB' – the Buddha gave him free pardon for the nonce. There is no other way to solve this Saṁsāric riddle. But one thing. When 'Attention' began exposing the inside story of the plot, confessing his own complicity in it as non-radical attention, something like 'catching-the-thief-red-handed' happened in the end. I shall tell you the whole story later. Why do we say it is like 'catching-the-thief-red-handed?

Because it is due to this guy 'Attention' that every 'thing' in the world becomes a 'THING'!

'*Manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā*'

'All things have attention as their origin'

Everything originates from attention. Attention is the discoverer of 'the thing'. All things are rooted in interest ('*chandamūlakā sabbe dhmmā*'). There is a very important discourse bearing on this topic which we might have mentioned earlier. The special significance of attention lies in the fact that it makes a 'thing' what it is. That is why the 'THUMB' is so important. To anyone in this world 'a thing' becomes 'the thing' only when his attention picks it up. Isn't that so? Just think about it. Setting aside all your problems, you all are now listening to this sermon. But as

soon as you go home, problems crop up again. How? Your attention went there. Attention picks up the problems. When a problem comes up, it is 'the thing' for you. But it is 'nothing' for your neighbour. Your problem has made it 'the thing' for you. Although 'Attention' was granted free pardon, when he confesses his part in the plot, it becomes obvious that he is the biggest thief. It is as if he is caught redhanded. What is that he has stolen? 'THE THING' – the 'mind object' ('*mano-dhammā'*). 'Mind and mind objects' constitute the most formidable dyad of all. The other dyads, like eye and forms, ear and sounds, are simple. The subtlest point is where the mind strikes the 'mind-object' (*dhamma*). That is the most elusive object. What is it that we call 'what comes to my mind?' Let me quote from the first verse of the *Dhammapada*, as usual:

'*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā*

manoseṭṭhā manomayā'

'Mind is the forerunner of mind objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made'

These two lines are found in the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*. Until the Buddha came on the scene, everyone thought that things exist in themselves and that mind comes later.

The Buddha, however, pointed out to the world that 'mind' comes first and 'things' come later. Not only that. '*Manomayā*'.

'Things' are mind-made. That 'gem-in-the-pond' was mindmade,

The angel of Narcissus was mind-made. The Buddha proclaimed to the world this nature of phenomena.

Modern scientists should ponder over the Buddha's comparison of all perceptions to a mirage. Not only the scientists but some of our silly people also take up their viewpoint. That is not science but nescience. If the scientists get a hint to the correct direction, they might understand that they have got stuck somewhere. It is because they started from the wrong end. In the last analysis, they will have to grant the fact that 'things' originate from attention ('*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā'*). In the final reckoning, 'attention' is found to be the culprit. What is the reason for attention? Interest (*chanda*). In the same discourse, it is said that 'all things are rooted in interest' (*chandamūlakā*). Interest is the lightest shade of craving (*taṇhā*). That is why the Buddha preached that interest is also the root of the Five Aggregates of grasping. The word *chanda* has the sense of 'liking' or 'wanting'. It is because of '*chanda*' that Narcissus saw an angel and the King saw a gem. So one can understand why the Buddha has preached that in order to attain emancipation, ignorance and craving must be done away with.

We have to kill our Saṁsāric 'mother' and 'father'. Craving is the mother and ignorance the father whom we have to kill according to a riddle verse in the *Dhammapada* (*mātaraṁ pitaraṁ hantvā* – having killed the mother and the father). We have come all this long way in *Saṁsara* because of the 'hindrance' (*nīvaraṇa*) of the father and the 'fetter' (*saṁyojana*) of the mother.

That in short is the secret of the vortex. Interest is that lightest shade of craving, which comes in almost unknowingly. If you try to keep track of your thoughts, you will find that suddenly a thought breaks in as from nowhere. But if you are sharp enough, you will realize that in some subtle way as if in a dream a need or a wanting surfaces. As soon as it arises, it becomes 'the thing'. There is a lot to be said on this point. I have put it in brief. If there is merit in you all and life in me, perhaps you will get the opportunity to listen to some more sermons like this.

So from what little we have told you, you might understand these things – though scholars may not – since you are now on higher precepts and in a meditative state of mind. We invite you to open up for yourselves the path of insight and realize your higher aspirations. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma realm, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits in rejoicing conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims! May you too as soon as possible in this very dispensation of the Buddha, understand the Four Noble Truths through knowledge of the Law of Dependent Arising and attain the Deathless Ambrosial *Nibbāna*!