Paticca Samuppada Sermon 4

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 186)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

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

Antojaṭā bahijaṭā

jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā

taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāmi

ko imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño

cittaṁ paññañca bhāvayaṁ

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu

so imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

Yesaṁ rāgo ca doso ca

avijjā ca virājitā

khīṇāsavā arahanto

tesaṁ vijaṭitā jaṭā

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca

ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

– Jaṭā Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S

A tangle within and a tangle without

The world is entangled with a tangle

About that, O! Gotama, I ask you

Who can disentangle this tangle

The wise one established in virtue

Developing concentration and wisdom

That ardent and prudent monk

It is he who disentangles this tangle

In whom lust as well as hate

And ignorance too have faded away

Those who are influx-free – the arahants

It is in them that the tangle is disentangled

Wherein both name and form

Resistance and the perception of form

Are cut off without any residue

It is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha has preached to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* that this entire progeny has got entangled like a tangled skein and get reborn again and again in woeful realms due to non-understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. In our last sermon we explained with reference to the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* how name and form are inter related and how name and form and consciousness are mutually dependent upon each other. Today we have chosen as our topic four verses which serve as a prelude for a further elaboration of the same discussion.

First of all, let us try understand the meaning of these verses. These verses are found in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The first verse presents a question which a certain deity put to the Buddha. The next three verses constitute the Buddha's answer to it. The general meaning is as follows:

Antojaṭā bahijaṭā jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā

There is a tangle inside and there is a tangle outside. The progeny is doubly entangled.

taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāmi ko imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

I question you Gotama, about that. Who will disentangle this tangle?

The answer given by the Buddha in the first verse amounts to this:

Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño cittaṁ paññañca bhāvayaṁ

The wise man having established himself on virtue, developing concentration and wisdom – (‘*citta*’ signifies concentration)

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu so imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

That monk who is ardent and prudent – it is he who disentangles the tangle.

Then the Buddha adds something more to the explanation:

Yesaṁ rāgo ca doso ca avijjā ca virājitā

Those ones in whom lust, hate and ignorance have been made to fade away –

khīṇāsavā arahanto

tesaṁ vijaṭitā jaṭā

Those influx-free arahants – it is in them that the tangle is disentangled.

Then for the fourth verse:

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca

ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

Where name and form as well as resistance and the perception of form are cut off without residue, it is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Out of these four verses, perhaps many of you are familiar with the first two, because the commentator, Venerable Buddhaghosa has made them the basic topic for his treatise *Visuddhimagga*. But it seems the last verse is the most abstruse.

In our last sermon we explained how ‘form’ gets a verbal impression through recognition given by ‘name’ and how ‘name’ gets a resistance impression by the impact offered by ‘form’. We mentioned in our last sermon that ‘contact’ is a combination of these two.

In short, ‘name’ and ‘form’ are intertwined like a tangle by their respective characteristics. As far as we can see, this is the tangle within (*antojaṭā*). The Buddha has pointed out in detail that

'name and form' and consciousness are mutually interrelated. This is the tangle without (*bahijaṭā*). Although we explain it this way Venerable Buddhaghosa gives quite a different interpretation of the two terms in his commentary to the *Jaṭā Sutta*. He takes *jaṭā* to mean 'craving' (*taṇhā*). According to him '*antojaṭā*' (tangle within) is craving for one's own requisites and '*bahijaṭā*' (tangle without) is craving for others' requisites. Alternatively, he suggests as a second interpretation, craving for one's own body is the tangle within and craving for another's body is the tangle without. He goes on to advance a third interpretation also. According to it, the six internal sense-spheres is the tangle within and the six external sense-spheres is the tangle without. This is how Venerable Buddhaghosa explains the two cryptic terms.

Venerable Buddhaghosa takes '*nāma'* to be a collective term for the four immaterial aggregates; feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhārā, viññṇaṁ).* But last time I got you all to count your fingers and be sure of the Buddha word that '*nāma*' stands for the five constituents:

feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Consciousness has no place in the definition of '*nāma*'. But just see.

All those who go by the commentarial tradition assert that '*nāma*' means the four immaterial aggregates. It is all wrong. Having defined '*nāma*' that way, the commentator takes up '*saññā*' for comment. According to him '*patighasaññā*' means '*kāma bhava*' (that is 'the sensual sphere'), and *'rūpasaññā*' means '*rūpa bhava*' (that is the Realm of form) and when these two are mentioned the formless Realm or '*arūpa bhava*' is already implied. This is how the line '*paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca*' is explained in the commentary. And then, as to the place where the tangle gets snapped the commentator says that on arriving at *Nibbāna* the tangle is snapped. That is all the commentary has to say. But we must point out that by the very mention of the words '*paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā*', it is obvious that we have to understand this question of the 'tangle' in the light of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

Today there might be in this crowd those who were not present to listen to our last sermon. To facilitate their understanding of what I am going to say and also to refresh the memory of those who were present the other day. I wish to recapitulate the dialogue between Venerable Ānanda and the Buddha. Even the method of explanation the Buddha adopted in regard to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* is extraordinary. Venerable Ānanda approaches the Buddha and says:

"It is wonderful Venerable Sir, it is marvelous Venerable Sir, how deep the Law of Dependent Arising is and how profound it appears. All the same, Venerable Sir, it appears to me as clear and clear"

The Buddha's response to it was:

"Do not say so Ānanda, do not say so. This Law of Dependent Arising is deep and it appears deep."

And then the Buddha, like an expert teacher catechized Venerable Ānanda, step by step, getting him to respond rather rhetorically in the negative. Usually, an obedient pupil is only too eager to

'YES' the teacher. But the Buddha addressed his questions to Venerable Ānanda in such a shrewd way, that the latter had to think deeply and come out with the same emphatic negative answer throughout:

'*No hetaṁ bhante'* – 'No indeed Venerable Sir'

Unlike in reading a book, in listening to a sermon, it is difficult to follow the entire catechism step by step. So the other day we gave a summary of the procedure by which the Buddha convinced Venerable Ānanda of the mutual relationship between '*nāma'* ('name') and '*rūpa*' ('form') in four statements.

First of all, let us try to make some sense out of those four statements. '*Nāma*' has to be defined not with reference to the four aggregates as the commentary says. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the constituents of '*nāma*'. What is meant by '*rūpa*' is actually '*rūpa saññā*' – 'perception of form'. It is based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air, none of which can stand alone or be recognized per se. They can be known only through the constituents of the name group. Now the first conclusive statement of the Buddha which Venerable Ānanda accepts through conviction amounts to this:

"If all those modes characteristics, signs and exponents by which the name group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest a verbal impression ('*adhivacana saṁphassa*') in the form group."

'*Adhivacana*'or synonym is a word representative of the linguistic medium, like *paññatti* (designation) and *nirutti* (terminology). So what is meant by the above statement is that there could be a recognition of the form group only through the constituents of name such as feeling and perception.

Then the second statement gives the converse:

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the form group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest a resistance-impression ('*paṭigha-samphassa*') in the name group."

That is to say, if there were no characteristics proper to the form group based on earth, water, fire, and air, there could be no resistance impression in the name group (ie. feeling, perception etc.). One cannot speak of resistance if there is no 'form'. The other day we gave a simile of a blind man to illustrate this. The commentary also makes use of a simile of a blind man in connection with '*nāmarūpa*'. But that is not the one we brought up. Suppose a blind man goes and hits against a huge block of ice. He would come back with a perception of earth. Next time he goes there, it is melting. He would come back with a perception of water. By the time he goes there again, it is boiling and he would perceive the fiery element already at a distance. Finally, when it is evaporating, he might get the perception of air through it. In the same way, the blind worldling recognizes the 'non-descript' four great primaries with the help of feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. We gave this simile just to show the mutual relationship between name and form. They are inextricably intertwined.

Now comes the third conclusive statement which drives home the point.

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which a name-group and form-group are designated were absent, there would not be manifest either a verbal-impression or a resistance-impression."

Here the Buddha has adopted a very subtle way of argument. Firstly, it is said that the presence of one is a necessary condition for the other to exist. Then it is said that in the absence of both, there would be neither a verbal impression nor a resistance impression.

The fourth statement is all the more conclusive:

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which name and form is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any contact."

So, it seems according to the Buddha, there is no contact ('*phassa*'), where there is no name and form ('*nāmarūpa*'). Just think about this. One might be tempted to question its validity. Because name implies feeling, perception and intention, one can ask:

"Well then, are we to assume that trees and stones have no contact?"

We gave a little simile to explain this. While rolling a stone, if it goes and strikes against another hard enough to make a crack on it, there will be no retaliation. That is the way with the inanimate world. But if two pedestrians collide with each other on a pavement in a rush hour, there would be a 'clash'. In the case of inanimate objects, 'contact' is something we attribute to them.

In the inanimate world, there is no place for the concept of touch or contact. It is only something we attribute or superimpose. To clarify this point further, the other day, we gave the simile of a carpenter. When a carpenter is joining two planks to fix up a door, he might have to speak of the two planks as 'touching' each other. Think of the way a forest fire starts. In a hurricane two trees go on rubbing against each other until fire comes up. But there is no feeling, perception or intention in them.

In the *Sutta Nipāta* there is a discourse called *Kalahavivāda Sutta* (Discourse on quarrels and disputes). It is entirely in verse and unfold in the form of a dialogue. The opening question is:

'*kuto pahūta kalahā vivāda*' – 'Whence do quarrels and disputes arise?' By way of answer, a whole chain of causes is given towards the end of which there is the following question:

> "*Phasso nu lokasmiṁ kuto nidānā"*
>
> "What is the cause of contact in this world?"

The reply is:

> "*Nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso*"
>
> "Depending on name and form arise contact."

Those two pedestrians quarreled and disputed because they had name and form. That was not the case with the two stones. Actually, contact is something peculiar to the animate world where there is consciousness. So then, name and form are intertwined by their modes, characteristics, signs and exponents. This is the tangle within (*antojatā*).

Then let us see what 'the tangle without' (*bahijatā*) is. In regard to that too, we can put into four conclusive statements the gist of the catechism the Buddha addressed to venerable Ānanda. First of all, the Buddha asks:

"Ānanda, if consciousness were not to descend into a mother's womb, would name and form be left remaining in the mother's womb?"

The question of 'remaining' implies that name and form has already gone there. To ask whether name and form would be left remaining in a mother's womb if consciousness were not to go there, is to grant that somehow name and form is already there. Now, how does that happen?

What we are going to say from now onwards could be of interest to those intellectuals who keep on dabbling with questions relating to consciousness, name and form and rebirth. Here too, we shall give some sort of illustration by way of clarification. Supposing a patient who has just undergone a serious operation in a hospital is engaged in a struggle between life and death. He might see some sign of his future birth – say, in some mother's womb – in a critical moment. But suppose the doctors manage to save his life. Afterwards he might say that he went somewhere while he was in the coma. It is only a half-truth. It is not that he actually went there –only a sign of that place became an object for his consciousness. Name and form has gone there for a moment but consciousness was held back. This fact is borne out by the following rhetoric question of the Buddha. "Ānanda, if consciousness having descended in to the mother's womb, were to come out, would name and form be born in to this state of existence?"

"No indeed Venerable Sir."

From this it is clear that if despite the doctors' attempts the patient died, his consciousness would join that mental object (name and form) because we have already pointed out that the relationship between consciousness and name and form is a whirling round as in the case of a whirlpool. Think of a flexible rubber-band for instance. It can get elongated if it is pressed down at one point and stretched away with tension. The moment the other end is pressed down and the former released, it would go and 'join' the latter to form a new centre. In the same way consciousness gravitates towards its object – *nāmarūpa* – at the moment of death. However, as you all know, sometimes parents expect a child, but what comes out in the end is a still born grotesque form of a child. The reason is that due to some karmic force, consciousness has slipped out. This is the situation the Buddha points out as the second possibility.

This fact is clarified further by the third question:

"Ānanda, if the consciousness of a boy or a girl were to get cut off at the young age itself, will name and form come to growth and maturity?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

Even after the birth of a child if consciousness gets cut off name and form would not grow. Only a corpse will be left there.

When Venerable Ānanda granted that point, the Buddha draws the final conclusion.

"Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the arising, this is the condition – for name and form

– namely consciousness."

This is an emphatic assertion that consciousness is a necessary condition for name and form. Then the Buddha goes on to point out that, as far as the concept of existence is concerned, consciousness has to be accompanied by name and form, but if somehow or other, consciousness does not get established on name and form, the whole problem of existence is solved.

"If Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing in name and form, would there be manifest an arising of birth, decay, death and suffering in the future?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

The gist of the whole discussion can be given in two sentences. The consciousness of a non-arahant is an established consciousness ('*patiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*'). The consciousness of an arahant is an un-established consciousness ('*appatiṭṭhitaviññāṇa*'). Usually, in the case of an individual, consciousness is established on name and form. But there is a possibility of an unestablished consciousness where all the problems of birth, decay, death and suffering would cease. That is the consciousness of the arahant which is free from name and form. Now you all can understand the meaning of the last verse.

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

"Where name and form as well as resistance and the perception of form are cut off without remainder, it is here that the tangle gets cut off."

The 'tangle-within' between name and form as well as the 'tangle-without' between name and form and consciousness are all cut off. 'Where' refers to that '*Nibbānic mind*'. In an earlier sermon we spoke of a 'non-manifestative consciousness' ('*anidassana-viññāṇa*'). That is the state of an arahant's consciousness when he has attained to the concentration of the Fruit of Arahanthood (*arahattaphalasamādhi*). His consciousness does not manifest name and form. That unestablished consciousness ('*appatiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*') is sometimes qualified by the three terms. '*appatiṭṭhaṁ, appavattaṁ, anārammaṇaṁ* (not established, not continuing, object-less). To one who has attained that state there can be no rebirth.

As a rule, name and form and consciousness are found inter-related in the case of Saṁsāric beings. But the Buddha declared in one sentence that there is an exception to the rule. If somehow or other consciousness could be made to get unestablished on name and form, birth, decay, death and all the rest of suffering would come to an end. If this much is clear, let me give

a little more explanation about the concept of rebirth and the significance of the established consciousness.

In this connection, there is a very important discourse in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* by the name '*Cetanā Sutta*'. There the Buddha presents the point in question in a way that appeals to reason. It is presented in three short paras. The point at issue is the question as to how consciousness gets a footing – how consciousness gets established at the moment of death. In fact, it is an attempt to show us the connection between two lives. First of all, the Buddha declares to the monks the following statement:

"*Yañca bhikkhave ceteti yañca pakappeti yañca anuseti ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmiṁ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.*"

"Monks, what one intends, what one mentally constructs, whatever lies latent in him, that becomes an object for the stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence."

In the second passage the Buddha makes the following declaration:

"*No ce, bhikkhave, ceteti no ca pakappeti, atha ce anuseti ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmiṁ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti*."

"If monks, one does not intend and one does not mentally construct but one still has a latent tendency, this becomes an object for stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a production of future renewed existence."

There is something peculiar here. One does not intend nor does one mentally construct. The question very often raised is how one can think or intend in the case of one's instantaneous death. Though there is no intention or mental construction, there is that latent tendency. That is enough as an object for the establishment of consciousness. So there is still the possibility of rebirth in the future. This is the gist of the second statement.

In the third statement there is an allusion to arahanthood.

"*Yato ca kho bhikkhave, no ceva ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ na hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe asati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti tadappatiṭṭhite viññāṇe avirūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti na hoti"*

"But monks, when one does not intend and does not construct mentally and does not have a latent tendency, there is no object for the stationing of consciousness. When there is no object, there is no establishment of consciousness. When consciousness is not established and does not come to growth, there is no production of future renewed existence."

This passage gives a hint to the deliverance from the cycle of births and deaths. If at the moment of death one has neither an intention nor a mental construction nor a latent tendency, then there is no object for the stationing of consciousness. When there is no object, there is no question of rebirth. Here again, we have a distinction between the established consciousness and the unestablished consciousness.

Sometimes the Buddha points out the relation between one's last thought and the next birth.

"Monks, having encompassed a mentally corrupted person's mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in hell as if brought there. What is the reason? Because of the corrupted mind, he gets reborn in hell."

To some extent, it is like a latency.

Then the Buddha shows the other side.

"Monks, having encompassed a mentally pleased person's mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in heaVenerableas if brought there."

This reminds one of the story of Maṭṭakuṇḍali. Even though he had not done any meritorious deed, the last thought moment qualified him for rebirth in heaVenerable All this shows the power of one's last thought. Even the shade of a thought is enough to bring about rebirth. That shade becomes a 'photograph' when conjoined with consciousness. We brought this up because it is relevant to the question of rebirth which everybody is talking about.

Let us consider another aspect of the same problem. The passage of consciousness is the talking point these days. Particularly, the western psychologists who are in the grip of the personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) whenever they speak about consciousness have an idea of it as a monolithic whole. They know nothing about name and form. They interpret consciousness as something jumping from one birth to another. This is not a recent development. The fallacy is pre-Buddhistic. Even in the *Upanishads* of the Brahmins rebirth is explained with the simile of the leech. Think of the way a leech moves from place to place. This is because they conceived of consciousness as a self or soul. According to them rebirth is transmigration from place to place. But in our Dhamma as we pointed out existence is always a whirling round as in the case of a vortex or a whirlpool. How is this vortex formed? Dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness (*viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṁ nāmarūpapaccayā viññāṇaṁ*).

With the help of this idea of inter-relation between consciousness and name and form, the Buddha broke the tenacious self-view which had prevailed till then. It is not a case of just one thing. It is a turning round between two things as in the case of a vortex. In this connection there is a certain declaration by the Buddha which is very often misinterpreted.

"*Nāhaṁ bhikkhave aññaṁ ekadhammampi samanupassāmi yaṁ evaṁ lahuparivattaṁ yathayidaṁ cittaṁ, yāvañcidaṁ bhikkhave upamāpi na sukarā yāva lahuparivattaṁ cittaṁ."*

"Monks, I do not see even one other thing which turns round so quickly as the mind. So much so, monks, it is not easy to give a simile to show how quickly the mind turns round."

Some Buddhist sects use the simile of a turning-round of a fire brand (‘*aḷātacakravat*’) to depict the rapidity of thought. But that is not what is meant by the above declaration. Between consciousness and name and form, there is an extremely rapid process of grasping an object and letting go of it only to grasp another. Think of every moment of our conscious life. How quickly our minds shift from one object to another.

There is another discourse which supports this interpretation:

“*Varaṁ bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano imaṁ cātummahābhūtikaṁ kāyaṁ attato upagaccheyya natveva cittaṁ.*

Taṃ kissa hetu? Dissatāyaṁ bhikkhave, cātummahābhūtiko kāyo ekampi vassaṁ tiṭṭhamāno, dvepi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tīṇipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīpi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, pañcapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, dasapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vīsatipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tiṁsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, paññāsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vassasatampi tiṭṭhamāno bhīyyopi tiṭṭhamāno. Yañca kho etaṁ bhikkhave vuccati cittaṁ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṁ itipi taṁ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave, makkaṭo araññe pavane caramāno sākhaṁ gaṇhāti taṁ muñcitvā aññaṁ gaṇhāti:

taṃ muñcitvā aññaṃ gaṇhāti, evameva kho bhikkhave yamidaṁ vuccati cittaṁ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṁ itipi taṁ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati.”

“It would be better, monks, for the uninstructed worldling to take as self this body composed of the four great primaries rather than the mind. For what reason? Because this body composed of the four great primaries is seen standing for one year, for two years, for three, four or five or ten years, for twenty, thirty forty or fifty years, for a hundred years or even longer. But that which is called thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night.

Just as a monkey roaming through a forest grabs hold of one branch, lets go of it and grabs another and then lets that go and grabs still another, so that which is called thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night.”

The point of the discourse is that there is no justification whatever for taking mind as one’s self. The phrase ‘*aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati*’ – ‘It arises as one thing and ceases as another’ has a very deep meaning. A clue to its meaning is found in the simile of the monkey. It gives a hint to the rapidity of the process of grasping and letting go. In the same way, consciousness grasps name and form (its object) incessantly. The incessant inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is what is meant by the term ‘*lahuparivattaṁ*’. In fact, the literal meaning of ‘*parivattati*’ is ‘to turn round’. This turning round is between consciousness and name and form – the vortical inter-play which sustains the conceit of existence. That same inter-relation which goes on during one’s lifetime is instrumental in bringing about one’s rebirth. Consciousness does not decide the issue by itself. Name and form has to come in. The simile of the leech is misleading. There is a discourse which shows that during the Buddha’s time too, there were disciples who were influenced by this ‘leech-explanation’ of rebirth. It is the *Mahā Taṇhāsaṁkhaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

In that Sutta it is said that a monk called Sāti went round misrepresenting the Buddha declaring that the Buddha had made the following statement regarding the question of rebirth.

"*Tadevidaṁ viññāṇaṁ sandhāvati saṁsarati anaññaṁ* "This same consciousness keeps running and wandering in *Saṁsāra* by itself without anything else."

The other monks remonstrated with him as follows:

"*Mā evaṁ āvuso Sāti avaca, mā bhagavantaṁ abbhācikkhi. Na hi sādhu bhagavato abbhakkhānaṁ. Na hi bhagavā evaṁ vadeyya. Anekapariyāyena hāvuso Sāti paṭiccasamuppannaṁ viññāṇaṁ vuttaṁ bhagavatā:*

aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti."

"Friend Sāti, do not say so. Do not misrepresent the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One would not say so. For in various ways, friend, the Fortunate One has stated consciousness to be dependently arisen. Without a condition there is no origination of consciousness."

Despite all this criticism, Sāti did not give up his wrong view. Then the monks reported the matter to the Buddha who summoned Sāti to his presence and questioned him. Sāti maintained the same standpoint that it is the same consciousness that runs and wanders in *Saṁsāra* by itself without anything else.

Then the Buddha asked:

"What is that consciousness, Sāti?" and Sāti replied:

"Venerable Sir, it is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions."

Sāti's reply brings out the typical Brahmin viewpoint represented by the simile of the leech. The Buddha rebuked him calling him a vain man (*moghapurisa*) asking him:

"To whom have you known me to teach the Dhamma in that way? Have I not stated in various ways consciousness to be dependently arisen, with the words 'without a condition, there is no origination of consciousness."

Then the Buddha goes on to explain to the monks this dependently arisen nature of consciousness, giving a very effective simile to illustrate it.

"Monks, dependent on whatever condition a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. A consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and forms is reckoned as eye-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the ear and sounds is reckoned as ear-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the nose and odours is reckoned as nose-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the tongue and flavours is reckoned as tongue-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the body and tangibles is reckoned as body-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the mind and mind objects is reckoned as mind-consciousness. Just as monks, a fire is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it burns – a fire that burns dependent on logs is reckoned as a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is reckoned as a faggot-fire, a fire that burns dependent on grass is reckoned as a grass-fire, a fire that burns dependent on

cowdung is reckoned as a cowdungfire, a fire that burns dependent on chaff is reckoned as a chafffire, a fire that burns dependent on rubbish is reckoned as a rubbish-fire – even so a consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and forms is reckoned as eye-consciousness……. a consciousness that arises dependent on mind and mind-objects is reckoned as mind-consciousness.

It seems, then, that dependent on whatever condition (*yaññadeva paccayaṁ paṭicca*) a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. There is no consciousness in the abstract as the consciousness. It is always specific as a consciousness, even as there is no fire in the abstract as the fire. It is always specific as a fire. This simile strikes at the root of the animistic concept of a primordial fire. This revelation by the Buddha, though worded simply, revolutionizes the entire course of Indian thought. This is the marvel of the Law of Dependent Arising.

But then, what has happened in our own tradition? As you all know, in the majority of books now available for you to read, the position has gone topsy-turvy. It is as if we have retraced our steps to the Vedantic philosophy, without being aware of it. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists are talking about a consciousness that keeps jumping from one existence to another. They are unaware of the significance of the deepest point of the Law of Dependent Arising which the Buddha has proclaimed, namely, the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. That is the vortex of existence. Like the vortex in a river, it is indeed the deepest point. That is probably why the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* was so named.

Truly it is the *Mahā Nidāna* – the Great Cause. Name and form themselves are inter-related. It is not something compact. There is no 'form' without 'name and there is no 'name' without 'form'. That is why we identified it with the cryptic 'tangle-within' (*antojatā*). Likewise, we identified the inter-relation between consciousness and name and form with the 'tangle-without' (*bahijatā*) because when it comes to the question of rebirth, consciousness is 'here' and name and form is 'there' – in the mother's womb. However, name and form has to have consciousness to complete the picture of a new existence.

So then wandering in *Saṁsāra* is not like the movement of a leech. On the other hand, it is something like the stretching out of a flexible circular rubber-band when pressed down at one point – as we have already explained. As soon as it is released at this end, it will go and join the far end, if it is pressed down at that end also. Or else one can understand it as the change of the centre of the whirlpool. What we call our existence has at its centre this organic body we had grasped inside the mother's womb. Once born, we reach out for the objects of the six senses, somewhat like an octopus. However far the 'octopus' extends its 'suckers' they come back to this organic body because that is 'the-grasped-par excellence'. But when the time comes to abandon this body, consciousness gravitates towards its object already grasped (ie. *nāmarūpa*). The phrase '*imasmiñca saviññāṇake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu*' – (In this conscious body and in all external signs) gives a hint to this same inter-relation. This conscious body is what comes out of the mother's womb as a result of that gravitation towards the '*nāmarūpa* object'. But once born, it pursues the objects of the senses as before. It is the same seething whirlpool. Only the centre – the rallying point – has changed. That is why it is called 'the established consciousness' ('*patiṭṭhita viññāṇa*'). The difficult thing is the putting an end to this process. The deepest point is Therefore, the vortex between consciousness and name and form.

There is an extremely important sutta in this connection where Venerable Sāriputta explains the mutual interdependence between consciousness and name and form with a very effective simile. It is the *Naḷakaḷāpa Sutta* in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Once, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying at the Deer park in *Isipatana*. One evening Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, after his meditation in seclusion, approached Venerable Sāriputta and asked a question relating to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"Friend Sāriputta, is decay and death created by oneself or is it created by another or is it created both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

Venerable Sāriputta replied:

"Friend Koṭṭhita, decay and death is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another. But with birth as condition, decay and death comes to be."

Some of you might think it amusing to say that birth is the condition for decay and death, but this is the mode of conditionality. This is the starting point for analyzing *Paṭicca Samuppāda* from the very end. Decay and death is the last link and birth is the condition for it. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita asks:

"Friend Sāriputta, is birth created by oneself or is it created by another or is it created both by oneself and by another or neither by oneself nor by another?"

Venerable Sāriputta answers in the same way rejecting the tetralemma and showing that existence (bhava) is the condition for birth.

You had better remember that this is the procedure in radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*). Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita poses the same tetralemma regarding existence and Venerable Sāriputta rejects it and points out that grasping (*upādāna*) is the condition for existence. I hope you can understand the sequence of question and answer. The condition for grasping is craving, the condition for craving is feeling, the condition for feeling is contact, the condition for contact is the six sense spheres. Now be prepared. We are now approaching the crux of the problem.

Having disallowed Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita's tetralemma about the six sense spheres, Venerable Sāriputta says that name and form is the condition for the six sense spheres. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita puts the same question regarding name and form – as if he is ignorant of it. Actually, we do not know whether he is posing all these questions for his own sake or on our behalf, because both these venerables are veterans in the Dhamma. Well, whatever it is, this is the four cornered question regarding name and form.

"Friend, Sāriputta, is name and form created by oneself or by another, or both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

"Name and form, friend Koṭṭhita, is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another but with consciousness as condition, name and form comes to be."

“Friend Sāriputta, is consciousness created by oneself, or is it created by another, or is it created both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?”

“Consiousness, friend Koṭṭhita, is not created by oneself, nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another but with name and form as condition consciousness comes to be.”

So you see, to the question regarding the condition for name and form, the answer is consciousness and to the question as to the condition for consciousness, the answer is name and form. Now we are at the crux of the problem. Dramatically enough, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita recapitulates Venerable Sāriputta’s apparently contradictory statements in a rhetoric way.

“Friend Sāriputta, you yourself told me just now that consciousness is the condition for name and form but now you are telling me that name and form is the condition for consciousness. How am I to understand what you mean?”

But Venerable Sāriputta says:

“Well then, friend, I will make up a simile for you, for some intelligent people here understand the meaning of a statement by means of a simile.”

So this is how the stage is set for the highly significant and memorable simile of the ‘Two-Sheaves of-Reeds’ to come out.

“Just as two sheaves of reeds might stand supporting each other, so too with name and form as condition consciousness comes to be and with consciousness as condition name and form comes to be. With name and form as condition the six sense spheres come to be, with the six sense spheres as condition contact ……. Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

If, friend, one were to remove one of these two sheaves of reeds, the other would fall and if one were to remove the other sheaf, the first would fall. So too, with the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name and form, with the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of the six sense spheres, with the cessation of the six sense spheres, the cessation of contact……..Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

According to this simple but profound simile, the interdependence between consciousness and name and form is like that of two sheaves of reeds standing one supporting the other (*aññamaññaṁ nissāya ṭiṭṭheyyaṁ*). When name and form falls consciousness falls, when consciousness falls name and form falls, when name and form falls, the six sense spheres fall and along with it, contact falls, feeling falls, craving falls, grasping falls, existence falls, birth falls, decay and death and all the rest of it falls.

Imagine for a moment that the consciousness sheaf of reeds is standing on your left side and the name and form sheaf of reeds is on the right and leaning on the name and form sheaf of reeds stand the six sense spheres and the rest of the twelve links. The crucial point is the removal of the consciousness sheaf of reeds, with which name and form is removed. That is to say, with the cessation of name and form consciousness ceases. Cessation of consciousness is not tantamount to death. It is the state of ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ – Non-manifestative consciousness. Since that

Non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest name and form, the six sense spheres also cease, as well as contact, feeling and all the rest of it. This is an extremely deep point in this Dhamma. You should try to understand this now. I wonder why our commentarial tradition has fully ignored this subtle point all this time. What we have already said about the vortex is implicit in this simile of the two sheaves of reeds. Just consider why Venerable Sāriputta did not choose for his simile two blocks of solid timber with pith. He probably wanted to insinuate voidness (*suññatā*) by opting for pithless reeds. The common term for reed and bamboo in Pali is '*tacasāra*'. It means:

'having the bark itself as the pith'. The reed is hollow inside. It has no pith It is the same with sheaf of reeds. The insinuation is that consciousness is not something solid and compact. It is only a heap. The deluded world takes it to be a monolithic whole. Name and form is also a heap. That is what the insight meditator understands as he progresses in meditation. The net result of it is insight in to the not self-nature of phenomena. The meditator understands all this as impermanent, suffering and not-self.

The rapidity of the arising and ceasing of name and form is also implied. The inter-relation between name and form and consciousness is extremely rapid. That is the true meaning of '*lahuparivattaṁ*'. Existence is a conceit which tries to sit pretty on this inconceivably rapid mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. Venerable Sāriputta has pointed out how the cessation of existence is brought about. When he revealed this fact, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came out with a memorable eulogy as a joyous utterance.

"It is wonderful, friend Sāriputta. It is marvelous, friend Sāriputta, how well this has been stated by Venerable Sāriputta.

We rejoice in the Venerable Sārioutta's statement on these thirty six grounds. If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk practising in accordance with Dhamma. If a monk through revulsion towards decay and death, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping , he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life."

"If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards birth ……. existence ……. Grasping ……. craving ……. feeling…….contact……. the six sense-spheres ……. name and form ……. consciousness ……. Preparations ……. ignorance, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards ignorance, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk who is practising in accordance with the Dhamma. If a monk, through revulsion towards ignorance, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping, he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life."

This eulogy voiced by Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita has a practical value. That is why we quoted it in full. The thirty-six grounds are made up by multiplying the twelve links of the formula by the three points of eulogy concerning the preaching of the Dhamma, the practicing of it and liberation through it. This is clear illustration of the pragmatic value of the Law of Dependent Arising. If one rightly understands each of the twelve links in the context of conditionality and breaks the chain at that point, the entire chain is broken. However, the most crucial point, the

'*Mahā Nidāna*'– The Great Cause – is the inter-dependence between name and form and consciousness.

Well then, let me wind up for today. We have dealt with this topic in four sermons so far, because this aspect has remained hidden for some reason or other. That is why so many wrong views have come up.You had better give thought to this aspect without complaining that it is too deep. Of course, the Dhamma is deep, as the Buddha himself has said. There may be many here who wish to attain *Nibbāna* after seeing the Buddha. The other day we quoted the memorable words of the Buddha.

"*Yo paṭicca samuppādaṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati. Yo dhammaṁ passati so paṭcca samuppādaṁ passati"*

"He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising, sees the Dhamma and he who sees the Dhamma, sees the Law of

Dependent Arising."

Similarly, when Venerble Vakkali was always gazing at the Buddha's body, the Buddha dismissed him saying:

"What is the use of looking at this putrid body, he who sees the Dhamma sees me. (*Yo dhammaṁ passati, so maṁ passati.*) So, dear listeners, if some of you wish to see the Buddha and attain *Nibbāna*, see this Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbāna* is there, and the Buddha is there.

Well, enough for today. Perhaps all this came out through some inspiration. I am not sure whether you will get the opportunity to hear more about these things. Try to make use of what you have already heard. Today you have taken the higher precepts and spent the day in meditation. You had better remember these precious admonitions in the Dhamma and try to shape your lives accordingly. If you have any wrong views, get rid of them. It is only when you take up right view and having followed the path of practice, reach the goal of *Nibbāna*, that you realize the true value of those precious admonitions. May you all derive whatever inspiration possible from this sermon for your progress in your meditation, and be able to realize in this very life the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*! Whatever beings there are, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in this sermon! May it conduce to the attainment of their higher aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!