Paticca Samuppada Sermon 5

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 187)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

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

Akkheyyasaññino sattā

akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā

akkheyyaṁ apariññāya

yogamāyanti maccuno

Akkheyyañca pariññāya

akkhātāraṁ na maññati

tañhi tassa na hotîti

yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi

– *Samiddhi Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S.*

Beings are aware of what can be named

They take their stand on what can be named

By not fully understanding what can be named

They come back to go under the yoke of Death.

He who fully understands what can be named

And thinks not in terms of one who speaks

For such things do not occur to him

That by which they speak, that is not for him.

Dear Listeners,

The teacher of the three realms, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, has revealed to us, through the Law of Dependent Arising, that a good many of the problems, controversies, debates and disputes in the world arise from linguistic conventions. The problem of *Saṁsāra*, which is the biggest problem, is also due to it. On this first full moon day of the newyear, we have taken up as the topic of our sermon, two verses relating to that aspect of linguistic usage.

These two verses are found in the *Samiddhi Sutta* of *Sagāthaka Vagga* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There is an interesting introductory story to these two verses which has a flavor of Dhamma in it. When the Buddha was staying at the *Tapoda* monastery in *Rajagaha*, Venerable Samiddhi woke up at dawn and went to the hot springs at *Tapoda* to bathe. Having bathed in the hot springs and come out of it, he stood in one robe drying his limbs. Then a certain deity, who was exceedingly beautiful, illuminating the entire hot springs, approached Venerable Samiddhi and standing in the air addressed him in verse:

Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu

na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi

bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu

mā taṁ kālo upaccagā

Not having enjoyed, you go for alms, monk You do not go for alms, having enjoyed. Having enjoyed, monk, you go for alms Let not the time pass you by.

'*Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu*' – Monk you have come to this monkhood which is dependent on alms not having enjoyed the fivefold sense-pleasures. '*na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi*' – Not that you have come to monkhood after enjoying the sensepleasures. '*bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu*' – Monk, go to monkhood having enjoyed the sense-pleasures. '*mā taṁ kālo upaccagā*' – Do not let the best time for enjoying sensepleasures – that is youth – pass you by. Here is an invitation that goes against the Dhamma and here is the reply Venerable Samiddhi gave to it.

Kālaṁ vo'haṁ na jānāmi

channo kālo na dissati

Tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi

mā maṁ kālo upaccagā

I do not know the time of death

Hidden is the time – it is not seen

That is why I go for alms without enjoying

Let not the opportune time pass me by

'*Kālaṁ vo'haṁ na jānāmi*' – I do not know when I have to die, '*channo kālo na dissati'* – The time of death is hidden from me – it is not seen. '*Tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi*' – Therefore, I have come to monkhood without enjoying sense-pleasures. '*mā maṁ kālo upaccagā'* – With the thought:

'let not the opportune time for monkhood pass me by.' The deity's advice was not to let the time for enjoying sense-pleasures, that is youth, pass by. What Venerable Samiddhi says is that youth is the proper time for striving as a monk, since one cannot do it in decrepit old age.

But the deity did not give up his attempt to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. He came down and standing on the earth said:

"Monk, you have gone forth while young with a lad's black hair, endowed with the radiant youth, without having dallied with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures, monk, do not abandon what is directly visible in order to pursue what takes time ('….*mā sandiṭṭhikaṁ hitvā kālikaṁ anudhāvī*.') Venerable Samiddhi's rejoinder is exemplary.

"Friend, it is not that I abandon what is directly visible and run after what takes time. For the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, are full of suffering and full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater. Visible here and now is the Dhamma, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards, to be personally experienced by the wise."

And then the deity asks:

"But how is it monk, that the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, full of suffering, full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater? How is it that this Dhamma is visible here and now, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards and to be personally experienced by the wise?"

But the Venerable Samiddhi said:

"Friend, I am newly ordained, a new-comer in this Dhamma and Discipline. I cannot explain in detail. There is that Fortunate One dwelling at the Tapoda monastery in Rajagaha. You had better approach him and question him on this point. As he explains it to you, so you should bear in mind."

However, the deity says:

"Monk, it is not easy for me to approach that Fortunate One. He is always surrounded by other deities of great influence. If you go and question on this matter, we too will come to hear the Dhamma."

Venerable Samiddhi agreed to the request and approached the Buddha and related the whole incident. That deity also was present. Then the Buddha addressed the above two verses to that deity.

Akkheyyasaññino sattā

akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā

akkheyyaṁ apariññāya

yogamāyanti maccuno

These words might sound strange to some of you. If we go by etymology, √*khyā* in '*akkheyya*' means 'to tell' and '*akkhāna*' is 'tale'. '*akkheyyaṁ*' is Therefore, 'what has to be told'. It can also mean 'what can be named' or verbally conveyed. The perception of beings is based on the 'nameable'–

(‘*akkheyyasaññino sattā*’) They take their stand on what is named or expressed – (*akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā*). Not having fully understood the nameable – (*akkheyyaṁ apariññāya*) they come back again to go under the yoke of Death – (*yogamāyanti maccuno*).

Akkheyyañca pariññāya

akkhātāraṁ na maññati

tañhi tassa na hotîti

yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi

Then the other side of the position is given which is relevant to the arahant. Having fully understood the nameable for what it is (*akkheyyañca pariññāya*), He does not conceive of a speaker – (*akkhātāraṁ na maññati*). If the limitations of language are correctly understood, one does not take seriously the subjectobject relationship. Such imagining is no longer there in him (*tañhi tassa na hotîti*). Not for him is that by which one may speak of him (*yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi*). That means, the arahant has transcended linguistic limitations.

Having uttered these two verses, the Buddha, as if challenging the deity’s powers of understanding, said – “*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so.”

Sometimes in the discourses, even for deities and gods, the word ‘*yakkha*’ is used. It is not to be taken as a derogatory term here. Even the *Sakka* is sometimes called a ‘*yakkha*’. Anyway the deity confessed that he could not understand in detail what the Buddha has said in brief and asked him to explain it in detail. As if to tease him, the Buddha uttered another deep verse.

Samo visesī athavā nihīno

yo maññati so vivadetha tena

tīsu vidhāsu avikampamāno

samo visesīti na tassa hoti

He who conceives himself equal, superior or inferior

Might thereby get involved in debate

But to one unshaken in the three grades of conceit

A fancying as equal or superior does not occur.

Equal (*samo*) superior (*visesī*) and inferior (*nihīno*) are the three grades of conceit. Whoever conceives in terms of these grades will dispute over them. But he who is unshaken by these three grades does not think in terms of equal or superior. With this verse as explanation, the Buddha again repeated the challenge:

“*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so.”

The deity confessed that he still cannot understand and begged the Buddha once more for a detailed explanation. The Buddha responded by uttering a longer verse which goes even deeper than the previous one.

Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ na ca mānamajjhagā

acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe

taṁ chinnaganthaṁ anīghaṁ nirāsaṁ

pariyesamānā nâjjhagamuṁ

devā manussā idha vā huraṁ vā

saggesu vā sabbanivesanesu

He cast off reckoning, no conceit assumed

Craving he cut off – in this name and form

That bond-free one – from blemish and longing free

Him no gods or men – in their search could ken

Searching here and beyond – in heavens and in all abodes.

The verse sums up the accomplishments of an arahant. '*Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ'* – he has given up reckoning. As we once explained, *'sankhā'* is literally, 'number.' We pointed out that the numeral is the most basic or primary ingredient in a linguistic medium. You may have seen how dumb people converse counting on fingers. So we may call it a 'reckoning' – a term denoting a characteristic of language in general. An arahant has given up 'reckoning' – that is, he does not go by it. '*na ca mānamajjhagā'* – he does not take up conceit. '*acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe*' – he cut off craving in this name and form. We have pointed out that 'name' is not 'bending' as traditionally explained but that it is a collective term for feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention through which we get an idea of 'form' (*rūpa*) based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air. Worldlings are attached to this name and form but the arahant has cut off that craving. Having severed that bond ('*taṁ chinnaganthaṁ'*), he is free from blemish and desire ('*anīghaṁ nirāsaṁ'*). Gods and men searching for the object of an arahants mind, cannot locate it in heavens or in other abodes.

With this profound verse, the Buddha repeated the challenging words:

"Yakkha, if you understand, say so."

This time the deity himself utters a verse in which he claims to give the detailed explanation of what the Buddha has preached in brief.

Pāpaṁ na kayirā vacasā manasā

kāyena vā kiñcana sabbaloke

kāme pahāya satimā sampajāno

dukkhaṁ na sevetha anatthasaṁhitaṁ

Let one not do any evil by word or by mind

Or else by body anywhere in this world

Giving up sense pleasures, mindful and fully aware

Let one not form ally with suffering bound up with woe.

With that, the episode ends. One might wonder why the Buddha addressed such deep verses to the deity. It may be that the Buddha wanted to impress the deity of the depth of this Dhamma since the latter made light of it by trying to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. Whatever it is, these verses are highly significant in revealing the Buddha's attitude to language. Let us try to analyse the meaning of these verses.

'*Akkheyyasaññino sattā'* – The perception of the worldlings is language-oriented. '*akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā'* – They rely heavily on language. They are unaware of the limitations imposed on language by grammar and syntax. The subject-object relation is part and parcel of the linguistic medium. But the worldlings take it seriously. '*akkheyyaṁ apariññāya – yogamāyanti maccuno*' – by not fully understanding the nature of language, they come again and again to go under the yoke of Death.

On a previous occasion, while talking about *'nāma-rūpa'* (name and form) we brought up the simile of the dog on the plank. Later we improved on that simile by relating the story of Narcissus. The handsome Greek youth Narcissus who had never seen his own face, while roaming in a forest, bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face in the water, he imagined it to be an angel's, and fell in love with it. After a vain attempt to embrace it, he pined away and died by the pond. 'Narcissism' as a term for self-love, now found in the Dictionary, is reminiscent of that Greek youth. The sum-total of the 'nameable' is found in name and form of which beings are conscious and on which they take their stand. By not understanding fully name and form, beings go under the yoke of Death. Take for instance the case of a wealthy man. What is the self-love that comes up at the moment of his death? "How can I part with this house and property? How can I leave behind my wife and children?"

That is the name and form he grasps – the reflection of his own self. In that grasping there is a longing for another birth.

"Oh! Give me a chance to fulfill my desire!"

"There you are" says *Māra*, and gives him not exactly what he wants but what he deserves according to his *Kamma*. So he comes back to his own house either as a rat, a snake or as a frog. Or else he comes back to sit on his own chair as a dog. That is how one takes one's stand on the nameable – (*'akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā')*. Worldlings are involved in an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. They are not aware that name and form is only a reflection.

That is what the Buddha makes known to the world. If one takes one's stand on name and form, one comes under the yoke of Death.

There is another reason for our choice of this particular topic for today's sermon. You might remember that in a previous sermon we discussed at length an extremely important discourse which our commentarial tradition has not taken seriously – namely, the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. We showed how the Buddha explained to Venerable Ānanda, the inter-connection between name and form as well as the inter-relation between name and form and consciousness. Although we quoted the highly significant passage in which the Buddha sums up that exposition, we could not explain it the other day. It is with the aim of paving the way for a discussion of that passage that we brought up the above two verses, as the topic today. First of all let me cite that passage in full.

"*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññānena.*"

"In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born, grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there a pathway for verbal expression, in so far only is there a pathway for terminology, in so far only is there a pathway for designation, in so far only is there a sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round for a designation of thisness, that is to say, as far as name and form together with consciousness."

Now for an explanation – here the Buddha is telling Venerable Ānanda that one could be said to be born, to grow old or die or pass away or reappear, that there is a pathway for verbal expression or terminology or designation, that there is any scope for wisdom and a whirling round for designating a thisness – all these are traceable to a connection between name and form and consciousness. The range of wisdom extends as far as consciousness and name and form.

The most important declaration is that there is a whirling round for a designation of 'this-ness' ('*ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati îtthattaṁ paññāpanāya'*). We have explained earlier the meaning of the term *itthatta*. '*Itthaṁ*' means 'this'. So '*itthatta*' is 'thisness'. It stands for 'the state of this existence.' Therefore, the phrase in question means that there is a whirling round for designating this state of existence. You had better recall the simile of the vortex. Only when there is a vortex or a whirlpool in the ocean, can one point out a 'there' or 'here'. In order to explain this whirling round between two things, we cited the change of prices in the market based on supply and demand. In fact, all forms of existence are traceable to an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. This, then is the Samsāric vortex.

When we see how a whirlpool in the sea or in a river draws in the flotsam and jetsam around it, we point it out saying 'There' or 'Here.' Likewise we call a heap of grasping – a 'livewhirlpool' – a Person. The 'first person' is of course 'I myself.' 'You are' the 'second person,' and 'He, over there' is the 'third person.' At least there has to be the latent conceit 'Am' ('*asmimāna*') to justify 'Existence'. With the recognition of this 'Person', the entire repertoire of grammar and syntax falls into place. Here 'I' am, yonder 'you' are and there 'he' is. This is the basic framework for grammar. The Buddha points out to us that it is because we are enslaved by the grammatical

super-structure that we cannot understand *Nibbāna* and put an end to *Saṁsāra*. But if one reflects deeply, one would discover that the grammar itself is the product of ignorance and craving. Because of these, the worldlings get enslaved to linguistic usages. They do not understand the pragmatic purpose of linguistic usage. They think that the grammar of language conforms to the grammar of nature. The Buddha, on the other hand revealed to the world that language is merely a convention of limited applicability.

Let me mention another point that is relevant to this subject. Once a deity raised a question in the Buddha's presence regarding a doubt which even some of you might entertain. It is worded in the form of a verse but we shall give the gist of it. He asks why the arahants who have accomplished the 'TASK' still go on using such expressions as 'I say' ('*ahaṁ vadāmi'*) and 'they tell me' ('*mamaṁ vadanti'*). Is it because they still have conceit (*māna*) in them? The Buddha explains that the arahant has given up bonds of conceit but that he uses the worldly parlance only as 'a way of speaking'.

'*Loke samaññaṁ kusalo viditvā*

vohāramattena so vohareyya'

Being skillful in knowing the worldly parlance

He uses such expressions merely as a convention

Not only the arahants but the Buddha himself uses such words as 'I' and 'mine' only by way of convention. So you may understand that the fault is not in using worldly conventions, but in being unaware of the fact that it is merely a convention. It is due to the ignorance of this fact that all logicians, philosophers and scientists have got stuck in the 'WORD' and created a lot of confusion for themselves and for others to languish long in *Saṁsāra*.

There is a wonderful maxim made known by the Buddha which throws more light on this hidden aspect of language. The term '*akkheyyasaññino*' (lit, 'percipient of the expressible') reveals the close connection between perception and linguistic convention. The worldlings are in the habit of taking in perception. This perception has a connection with linguistic usage. The Buddha draws our attention to this fact with the following declaration, which is like a maxim. "*vohāravepakkāhaṁ bhikkhave saññaṁ vadāmi. Yathā yathā naṁ sañjānāti tathā tathā voharati evaṁ saññī ahosinti*."

"Monks, I say perception has as its result linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, just in that way one makes it known saying:

'I was of such a perception.'"

The word '*vipāka*' implicit in the expression '*vohāravepakkāhaṁ*' is not to be confused with '*kammavipāka*' or karmic result. It only means that perception matures into linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, so one makes it known. One does not stop at perception. There is an urge to express it – to make it known to others. There comes in the need for language. The way one conveys it to others is:

"I was of such a perception" or "I was percipient in this way."

One is already involved by saying so. In our writings we have explained the term '*papañcasaññāsaṅkhā'* as 'reckonings born of prolific perception.' Through prolific perception worldlings get caught up in language. '*Saṅkhā*' as reckoning includes not only numerals but linguistic usage as well.

It is very important to understand the connection between perception and linguistic usage. This understanding helps us to solve the problem of existence ('*bhava*') which is apparently insoluble. When it is said that perception gives rise to linguistic usage, one can ask whether it is possible to be free from the bane of perception. There are some discourses which, until recently have escaped the serious attention of scholars where it is said that the arahants, when they are in the attainment called the 'fruit of arahanthood' are free from all perception. Whatever there is in the world that could be regarded as an object of perception, from all that they are free while in that supramundane state. There are quite a number of discourses describing that extra-ordinary attainment. For instance in the *Sandha Sutta* we find the Buddha explaining to Venerable Sandha the nature of that *Samādhi*. Within the context of a simile about an excellent thoroughbred of a horse, the Buddha calls an arahant 'an excellent thoroughbred of a man' ('*bhadro purisājāniyo'*) and describes the nature of this concentration. It is said that in him the perception of earth, water, fire and air as well as other perceptions are not there.

There are many who raise the question whether materiality is fully negated and only mind is asserted in this Dhamma. We gave a certain simile to illustrate the correct standpoint. Suppose a blind man in his groping hits against a block of ice. He might come back with a perception of earth in it. When he approaches it the next time it is getting heated and he would come back with a perception of fire. By the time he goes there again it has melted and he returns with a perception of water. When he goes there for the fourth time it is evaporating and he brings back a perception of air. To make this simile meaningful we may compare the worldling to that blind man. The four great primaries (*cattāro mahābhūtā*) cannot be recognized as they are because they are always found as a combination. They can be distinguished only according to their intensity by means of constituents of the name group – feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Because of the feeling of hardness at the collision, that blind man got a perception of earth in the block of ice. That way name and form are inextricably interwoVenerable That we called the 'tangle-within' (*antojaṭā*). The 'tangle-without' (*bahijatā*) is the interrelation between name and form and consciousness, for which the doting on his own image by Narcissus is an illustration. The entire Samsāric puzzle is traceable to this vortex of existence.

How does word and concept aggravate this situation? The worldling, like that blind man, thinks that there is a 'thing' called 'earth', a 'thing' called 'water', a 'thing' called 'fire' and a 'thing' called 'air'. Surely, can one deny these 'things'? In the *Sandha Sutta* there is a complete list of such 'things', a perception of which is not there in the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood – the Realm of Infinity of Space, the Realm of Infinity of Consciousness, the Realm of Nothingness, as well as the seen, the heard, the sensed, and the cognized. Existence as a whole has ceased. Whatever perception there is characteristic of existence, whatever object of the mind there can be, from all that, that 'thoroughbred of a man' is free while in the *Arahattaphala Samādhi*.

The way the Buddha winds up that sermon is highly significant. Having said that the excellent thoroughbred of a man does not meditate ('*na jhāyati*') on any of the possible objects of concentration, the Buddha emphatically asserts in the end that he does meditate (*jhāyati ca pana*). Now comes the impressive final declaration.

"*Evaṁ jhāyiñca pana sandha bhadraṁ purisājānīyaṁ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti. Namo te purisājaññā namo te purisuttama yassa te nābhijānāma yampi nissāya jhāyasīti.*"

Sandha, the thoroughbred of a man thus meditating

the gods with Inda, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati

even from afar bow down saying:

Homage to you, O thoroughbred of a man

Homage to you, most excellent of men

For what it is on which you meditate

That we can never comprehend"

This is the marvel of a Dhamma that transcends the world. The Buddha has presented this transcendental Dhamma through the *Arahattaphala Samādhi* (concentration of the Fruit of Arahanthood). This is none other than the experience of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*). It is, at the same time the cessation of the six sense spheres (*saḷāyatananirodha*). All the six sense spheres are rendered inactive. It is within these six that all the turmoil of the world goes on. During that extraordinary concentration, the existence has ceased. It is in fact a reverting to an experience already gone through at the attainment of arahanthood. That is why we pointed out that the arahants are not reborn by virtue of the fact that their last thought is this cessation of existence:

'*Bhavanirodho nibbānaṁ.' Nibbāna* is the cessation of existence. The arahants experience the taste of *Nibbāna* while in this paradoxical *Samādhi*.

All this shows that this is an extraordinary Dhamma. The question of language is also implicit in the solution offered. When the mind is fully liberated from perception, it is completely free from objects. We have earlier mentioned the terms used with reference to the emancipated mind – '*appatiṭṭhaṁ, appavattaṁ, anārammaṇaṁ.*' That mind is not established anywhere, It has no continuity or existence and it has no object. '*Bhava*' or existence has ceased. The realization of cessation is itself the Deliverance. That is *Nibbāna* – not anything else. There is a lot of controversy among scholars regarding *Nibbāna*. Some would even call our interpretation Nihilistic.

Let me Therefore, bring up something special from this point onwards. In an earlier sermon we have already mentioned what the Buddha had said about consciousness. The nature of the consciousness of an arahant and the emancipation meant by *Nibbāna* can be understood in the light of what we have discussed so far. If we are to clarify further in terms of the simile of the vortex, it is as if the vortex has ceased. As a matter of fact, this simile of the vortex or the whirlpool is not something we have arbitrarily introduced. It is there in the discourses as a word of the Buddha, but the commentarial tradition has ignored it. Commentators have not understood its true significance. There is a very important verse in the *Udāna* that can be quoted in support of this. It comes as a paean of joy uttered by the Buddha in praise of Venerable *Lakuṇtakabhaddiya* who was an arahant.

acchecchi vaṭṭaṁ

byagā nirāsaṁ

visukkhā saritā na sandati

chinnaṁ vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

esevanto dukkhassa

The whirlpool he cut off and reached the Desireless

Streams dried up flow no more

The whirlpool cut off whirls no more

This itself is suffering's end.

He cut off the whirlpool or vortex. That is to say, the whirling around between consciousness and name and form has been cut off. Thereby he reached the Desireless (*byagā nirāsaṁ*). The current of water is dried up and flows no more. The whirlpool thus cut off no more whirls. And this itself is the end of suffering.

Supposing a whirlpool in the ocean comes to cease. As long as there is a whirlpool we can point out a 'here' and a 'there', 'this place' and 'that place'– or personifying it, 'this person', and 'that person'. But once the whirlpool has ceased, all these words lose their point of reference. Now there is only the wide expanse of the ocean as it was before the whirlpool came in. That 'foolish' current of water went in search of permanence in an impermanent world. It was a perversion, pure and simple. If at any point of time that current of water got dried up there is no whirlpool or '*vaṭṭa*' anymore. This is the whole story going by the '*vaṭṭa*' terminology. But strangely enough the commentators brought in some other kind of '*vaṭṭa*' to explain *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. They speak of '*kamma vaṭṭa'*, '*kilesa vaṭṭa'* and '*vipāka vaṭṭa*' (kamma-round, defilement-round and resultround). They have fully ignored the most important story of the round. You all can now form some idea about *Nibbāna*, about the arahants mind, and about the objectless mind.

Because of this charge of Nihilism let me touch upon another aspect of the problem. While discussing *Mahā Taṇhāsankhaya Sutta* in the previous sermon, we said that the Buddha had compared consciousness to a fire. As you know there are six consciousnesses – eye-consciousness, earconsciousness and so on inclusive of mind-consciousness. The Buddha has pointed out that each of these consciousnesses is like a specific fire dependent on a specific type of fuel. For instance consciousness dependent on eye and forms is eye-consciousness. It arises only in dependence and not otherwise. Apart from that there is no consciousness either in the eye or in forms. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. Because of ear and sounds arises ear- consciousness and so on. What is the simile that the Buddha has given to illustrate this point? A fire that burns dependent on logs is called a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is called a faggot-fire and a fire that burns dependent on chaff is called a chaff-fire. There is no abstract fire. It is always a specific fire. The Buddha compared the six kinds of consciousness to six kinds of fire. There is no independent consciousness to be called 'the consciousness'. Whatever has arisen due to causes and conditions has, of necessity, to cease when these causes and conditions are not there. It is when all the six consciousnesses, namely

eye-consciousness, earconsciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, bodyconsciousness and mind-consciousness, cease that there is deliverance which is also called:

'*viññāṇūpasama*' (appeasement of consciousness). As you all know, it is compared to the going out of a lamp as we find in the famous verse in the *Ratana Sutta*.

Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ

Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ

Te khīṇabījā avirūlhicchandā

Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo

Extinct is the old, nothing new to arise

Detached in mind as to future existence

They of extinct seed with no desire to sprout

Go out like this lamp – those Prudent Ones.

The verse figuratively conveys the situation at the last moment of the life of the arahants. '*Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ*' – All past kamma is finished. '*Navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ*' – There is no arising of new kamma. '*Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ*' – They are detached in mind as to future existence. '*Te khīṇabījā*' – Their consciousness seed is extinct. '*Avirūlhicchandā*' – Therefore, no desire can sprout forth in them. '*Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo*' – The prudent ones get extinguished even like this lamp.

The simile of the going out of a flame comes up again in the '*Upasīva māṇavapucchā*' in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

Accī yathā vātavegena khitto

atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ

evaṁ muni nāmakāyā vimutto

atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ

Like the flame thrown off by the force of wind

Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

So the sage when released from the name-group

Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

'*Accī yathā vātavegena khitto*' – just as a flame thrown off by the force of wind. '*atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' – goes to an end and cannot be reckoned as gone somewhere . '*evaṁ muni nāmakāyā vimutto'* – even so the sage released from the name-group. '*atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' – comes to his end and cannot be reckoned or predicated.

Upasīva is puzzled by this verse and implores the Buddha to explain further.

Atthaṁgato so udavā so natthi

Udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo

taṁ ve muni sādhu viyākarohi

tathāhi te vidito esa dhammo

Has he reached his end, or does he not exist at all

Or else is he eternally hale – not ill

That to me explain well, O'sage

For this Dhamma as such is known by you

Upasīva is asking reverentially whether that sage has gone to the end or whether he does not exist any more or else is eternally free from disease. Now the Buddha clarifies it further in the following verse with which the discourse ends. But unfortunately many scholars are confused over the grand finale.

Atthaṁgatassa na pamānamatthi

Yena naṁ vajju taṁ tassa natthi

Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu

Samūhatā vādapathāpi sabbe

Of one who has reached his end – no measure is there

That by which they may speak of him – that is not for him

When all objects of mind are rooted out

Rooted out too are all paths of debate

The Arahant who has reached his end is beyond reckoning. He cannot be measured. Name and form is that by which others may speak of him, but that he has given up. When all objects of the mind which were listed above are eradicated, all pathways of debate and controversy such as the dilemma and the tetralemma of the logicians are rendered ineffective. Logic is imprisoned between 'is' and 'is not'. Dhamma is beyond the pale of logic (*atakkāvacaro*). It is like the fire extinguished. This is an extremely clear-cut answer. But scholars have confounded the issue.

However, some Buddhist philosophers have correctly understood this position. *Aśvaghosa*, both a philosopher and poet, has beautifully presented this simile in his Sanskrit epic *Saundarānanda*.

Dīpo yathā nirvṛtiṁ abhyupeto

naivāvaniṁ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṁ

diśāṁ na kāncit vidiśāṁ na kāñcit

snehakṣayāt kevelameti śāntiṁ

Evaṁ kṛtī nirvṛtiṁ abhyupeto

naivāvaniṁ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṁ

diśāṁ na kāncit vidiśāṁ na kāñcit

kleṣakṣayāt kevalameti śāntiṁ

Even as the flame of a lamp when it goes out

Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament

Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction

By exhaustion of oil only reaches appeasement

So too the accomplished one when gone to extinction

Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament

Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction

By extinction of taints only reaches appeasement

When the flame of a lamp goes out by the exhaustion of oil, one cannot say that it has gone to the earth or to the sky or to any direction or sub direction. All one can say is that it has got extinguished. The term '*kṛtī*' stands for an arahant who has done his task (*katakaraṇīya*). He cannot be traced after his final attainment of *Parinibbāna* even like the flame of the lamp.

So it seems that although we started with *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as our topic, it automatically leads to a discussion of *Nibbāna*. As a matter of fact, *Nibbāna* cannot be understood without a knowledge of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Therefore, let me add a special message at this point that could be helpful to those who listen to these sermons. Twenty years ago when I was at Meethirigala Nissarana Vanaya, I happened to deliver thirty three sermons on *Nibbāna* to the group of meditating monks there. After a number of years the Dhamma Publications Trust of Colombo (D.G.M.B) published those 33 sermons in eleven volumes. An English translation also came out in seven volumes called "Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled."

The audio trust in Kandy (D.S.M.B) circulated those sermons and their translation in C.D. s and through its website all over the world. In those sermons on *Nibbāna*, we had occasion to say something on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as well. However, now a new series titled 'Pahan Kanuwa Paṭicca Samuppāda Sermons' is just coming up. This is the fifth sermon. I do not know how many sermons would make up this series. Let time decide it. Though the topic of the series is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, we cannot help discussing *Nibbāna* as well.

There is an episode which clearly shows the connection between these two topics. You may have heard that the Buddha after his enlightenment reflected on the depth of this Dhamma. It is said in *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* that after comprehending this wonderful Dhamma which is so

profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, the Buddha wondered how the worldlings can understand such a Dhamma. It occurred to him then that there are two truths which it is hard for the worldlings to see, namely, specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) or Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) and the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the extinction of craving, detachment, cessation *Nibbāna*. It is because worldlings are confined within linguistic conventions that they cannot understand the links of the formula of Dependent Arising. They are imprisoned by logic and compelled to assert 'is' or 'is not' – absolute existence or absolute non-existence. But the correct position is otherwise.

We have clearly pointed out what the basic principle of the law of Dependent Arising is.

This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises

This not being – this does not come to be

With the cessation of this – this ceases.

Here itself is the transcendence of logic (*atakkāvacara*). Logic wants us to say 'yes' or 'no' to the question of existence. But this is what the Buddha says. Worldlings find it difficult to take it in. They think that when an arahant finally passes away, he could be located somewhere. In this Law of Dependent Arising, there is a direct order and a reverse order. In the direct order we have the nature of *Saṁsāra* as-it-is. Venerable Sāriputta became a stream-winner already as the ascetic Upatissa, when he heard only the first two lines of the verse uttered by Venerable Assaji.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā

tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha

Whatever things that arise from causes.

Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

Upatissa inferred by it, that if something arises from a cause, it has of necessity to cease when the cause ceases. The last two lines are on *Nibbāna*.

Tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamano.

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great ascetic.

If a problem is properly understood the solution is also in it. The direct order of the Law of Dependent Arising is the statement of the problem. The reverse order gives the solution. It is very difficult for the worldlings to understand that they are incarcerated between 'is' and 'is not'.

Given ignorance, a series of conditioned phenomena come to be. With the cessation of ignorance they cease to be. There is an extremely important discourse which highlights these distinctive features of the Dhamma. Let us briefly touch upon it for the present. It is the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. A monk, *Kaccānagotta* by name, approaches the Buddha and says:

"Venerable Sir, 'Right View', 'Right View' it is said. In what way Venerable Sir, is there right view?"

You may have heard various definitions of right view.

Here is something peculiar:

The Buddha says:

"*Dvayanissito khvāyaṁ Kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca.*

Lokasamudayaṁ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti.

Lokanirodhaṁ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti."

"This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends upon a duality – upon the notion of existence and the notion of non-existence. For one who sees the arising of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world."

Here the Buddha points out that the world is resting on the two extreme views of existence and non-existence. Then this is how the Buddha shows us the middle way. For one who sees the arising of the world as it is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence. To the insight meditator who sees the arising aspect of the world, the notion of absolute non-existence does not occur. And to the insight meditator who sees the cessation aspect of the world, the notion of absolute existence does not occur. The world is holding on to the two dogmatic views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. But the Buddha avoids this absolutism. *Paticcasamuppanna* means arisen in dependence on causes and conditions. The world is incessantly arising and ceasing. But the worldling resting on the notion of the compact due to craving and grasping, tenaciously believes that a thing exists absolutely. If absolute existence is one end the other end should be absolute non-existence, tantamount to annihilation. But as we sometimes pointed out, if anything is lost, it is only the ignorance that 'there is something' and the craving that 'there isn't enough.' That is all. There is nothing to lament. This is precisely why Gotama Buddha as well as Vipassi Buddha made known their realization with the words:

"*Samudayo samudayoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi.*

. . . . nirodho nirodhoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi."

"Arising, arising – thus monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light.

. . . . Cessation, cessation – thus monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light."

The process of arising and cessation is going on all the time, but the worldling has taken up the wrong view called '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' (personality view) misconstruing the whole group to be existing (*sat + kāya*). Because of that view they are imprisoned by the limitations of language and logic which rest on the duality of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Not only the ordinary worldling, but the worldly philosopher as well as the modern scientist has got stuck there. Not being satisfied with the dilemma, the philosopher has created a tetralemma to make the confusion worst confounded. But the Buddha has transcended all these by this Dhamma which is *atakkāvacara* ('not moving within the sphere of logic'). He transcended logic the moment he gained the insight into the incessant arising and ceasing. He understood that it is not possible to take a definite stand on 'is' or 'is not'.

Let me give a simple illustration for your easy comprehension – a simile I gave in my sermons on *Nibbāna*. I suppose you all like similes. Sometimes behind a shop window or in a showroom they display a 'magic-kettle', from which water flows non-stop into a basin under it. The kettle never goes empty nor does the basin overflow. That is the magic. The secret is that there is a hidden tube which conducts the water back into the kettle. Well, take it that the world itself is a 'Magic-kettle'. The process of arising and ceasing is going on all the time even within our bodies. So also in the world outside. World systems go on arising and ceasing – expanding and contracting (*vivaṭṭa* and *saṁvaṭṭa*). This is the profound truth the Buddha has revealed to the world. But the worldlings committed and limited as they are by 'personality-view' and enslaved as they are by perception, by language and logic, come again and again under the yoke of Death ('*yogamāyanti maccuno*').

Well, enough for today. I hope you will bear with me if some explanations appeared too deep. But you need not complain like that deity. Perhaps when the sermon comes in a form of a C.D. you can absorb it quietly. I take it that you all have spent the day observing higher precepts in a meditative atmosphere with *Nibbāna* as your aim. I wish this sermon too will help you realize your noble aspirations. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma-world, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims!