Paticca Samuppada Sermon 10

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 192)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

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

Lobhajaṁ dosajaṁ ceva – mohajaṁ cāpaviddasu

yaṁ tena pakataṁ kammaṁ – appaṁ vā yadi vā bahuṁ

idheva taṁ vedanīyaṁ – vatthu aññaṁ na vijjati

Tasmā lobhañca dosañca – mohajaṁ cāpi viddasu

vijjaṁ uppādayaṁ bhikkhu – sabbā duggatiyo jahe.

– Devadūta Vagga A.

'In the case of an ignorant one, whatever deed born of greed, hate or delusion done by him, be it little or much, has to be experienced here itself – there is no other site for it.

Therefore, let the wise monk, arousing knowledge, give up deeds born of greed, hate and delusion and all bad bournes'

Dear Listeners,

Poson Poya day is, for the Buddhists of this country, a day, which arouses a great enthusiasm in the Dhamma. Due to the establishment of Buddha's dispensation in this country by the mission of the arahant Venerable *Mahinda Thera* and his group of monks, King *Devānampiyatissa* and the inhabitants were able to build up a vision of life in accordance with the Right View. They formed a correct vision of values regarding good and bad, skilful and unskilful and merit and demerit.

By taking up two verses pertaining to that philosophy of life as the topic of our tenth sermon on Dependent Arising, we hope to present this sermon as a *Poson* sermon befitting the occasion. These two verses are found in the *Devadūta Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Even from the first paragraph of that discourse the relation between *kamma* and the Law of Dependent Arising is made clear.

This is how the Buddha begins the discourse:

"Monks, there are these three causes for the arising of deeds. What are the three?

Greed is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Hate is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Delusion is a cause for the arising of deeds."

Then the Buddha says:

"Monks, whatever deed that is done with greed, born of greed, caused by greed, arisen from greed, wherever his selfhood is born, there that deed ripens, where that deed ripens, there he experiences the result of that deed either in this very life or in the next birth or in any subsequent birth."

A similar pronouncement is made in regard to deeds born of hate and delusion. Then a certain simile is given as an illustration.

"Just as, monks, when seeds unbroken, not putrid, not affected by wind and sun, and capable of sprouting and well stored up, are sown on a good field well prepared, if the rain also comes down in plenty, then those seeds, monks, will come to growth and plenitude, even so, monks, whatever deed that is done with greed..... hate..... delusion wherever his selfhood is born, there that deed ripens. Where that deed ripens, there he experiences the result of that deed either in this very life or in the next birth or in any subsequent birth."

We can see that this simile about seeds has some relation between cause and effect. Then about skilful deeds the following pronouncement is made.

"Monks, there are three causes for the arising of deeds. What are the three? Non-greed is a cause for the arising of deeds. Non-hate is a cause for the arising of deeds. Non-delusion is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Monks, whatever deed that is done with non-greed, born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, arisen from non-greed, when greed is gone thus is that deed abandoned, uprooted made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non existent incapable of arising in the future."

The same is said about deeds born of non-hate and nondelusion and then a simile is given as an illustration.

"It is as if, monks, in the case of seeds unbroken, not putrid, not affected by wind and sun, capable of sprouting and well stored up, a man were to burn in a fire and having burnt it in a fire reduce them to ashes, and having reduced them to ashes blow off in a strong wind or get it swept away in a swift-flowing current of a river and thereby, monks, would those seeds be abandoned, uprooted, made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non-existent and incapable of arising in the future, even so, monks, whatever deed that is done with non-greed..... nonhate..... non-delusion..... when greed is gone..... when hate is gone..... when delusion is gone thus is that deed be abandoned, uprooted, made like a palm tree divested of its site, made nonexistent and incapable of arising in the future."

The meaning of this peculiar simile is that deeds done with non-greed are exhausted with the ending of greed. Why is that? Because the net result of deeds done with non-greed is the ending of greed itself. Similarly, deeds done with non-hatred get exhausted with the complete ending of hate. So also deeds done with non-delusion get exhausted with the complete ending of delusion. What we have here is the norm of rise and fall. Though it seems simple enough, there is something deep involved here. Deeds done with greed, hate and delusion germinate like seeds on getting rain. In fact, craving, in some contexts is compared to rain. As a synonym, for craving "*sineha*" signifies moisture. Beings in *Saṁsāra* go on with greed, hate and delusion given the rain or moisture of craving. Then the results of those deeds have to be experienced, either in this very life, or in the next birth, or else in subsequent births. But the roots of skilful deeds, namely non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion behave differently. For instance deeds done with non-greed get exhausted with the ending of greed. They are abandoned, uprooted and destroyed. It is as if someone, instead of sowing seeds, which could germinate, were to burn them, reduce them to ashes and blow off against the wind or throw into a swift flowing river. When the Buddha gives a simile, it is thorough and conclusive.

Here we have something deep. This *Saṁsāra* goes on due to greed, hatred and delusion. What we call skilful deeds – namely those born of non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion – are those that we make use of for putting an end to *Saṁsāra.* In the last analysis they conduce to our deliverance from *Saṁsāra.* There too we have something like the norm of arising and ceasing. Now let us take up the moral law of deeds (*Kamma*). Here we propose to discuss *kamma* from the point of view of the Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbedhikapariyāya Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* is a discourse revealing some highly significant aspects of the moral law of *kamma*. There the Buddha gives a six fold analysis of '*Kamma*' (deeds).

"Monks, *kamma* should be understood, the source and origin of *kamma* should be understood, the diversity of *kamma* should be understood, the result of *kamma* should be understood, the cessation of *kamma* should be understood, the way of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma* should be understood.

Having presented these six topics, the Buddha himself analyses them one by one. The analysis given to the first topic '*Kamma* should be known' is one that you all are familiar with.

"Cetanāham bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṁ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā."

"Monks, intention, I say, is *kamma*. Having intended one does *kamma* by body, by word, by mind."

This definition of *kamma* in terms of intention has quite a deep dimension in meaning. We can connect it with the analysis of Dependent Arising we have presented earlier. For the benefit of 'new comers' in this crowd let us mention it in brief. While analyzing name and form we brought up a certain simile. We compared the constituents of name to the five fingers of our hand. Feeling is the little finger, small but mischievous. Perception is the ring finger both popular and notorious. Intention is the middle finger prominent and intrusive. Contact is the forefinger, fussy and busy all the time Attention is the thumb standing apart but approachable to the rest. It is with these five members of the name group that we get hold of what constitutes "form".

Here too, it is the prominent and intrusive intention that the Buddha has called *kamma*. Of course it must be confessed that the simile of the five fingers is not found in the discourses.

Whatever it is, our comparison of intention to the 'prominent and intrusive middle finger' seems quite apt. As a matter of fact it is at the stage of intention that the notion of self becomes prominent and intrusive – and has to pay for that intrusion. Then the second point the Buddha has stated is the source and origin of *Kamma*. According to the Buddha, the source and origin of *Kamma* is contact. Just see, there again our simile is meaningful. We compared contact to the fore-finger fussy and busy all the time. It is the most proximate cause for the origin of *kamma* because next to it is 'attention' – the THUMB. It is attention that is instrumental in a change of focus from one thing to another. Those of you who have listened to our earlier sermons might remember our Narcissus simile. Narcissus was tempted to embrace his own reflection in water at the stage of intention. Then came contact and attention. Whatever it is, the Buddha has stated that contact is the source and origin of *kamma*.

Then comes the third point – the diversity (*vemattatā*) of *kamma*. This is explained as follows:

"There is monks, that *kamma* which has to be experienced in hell, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the animal realm, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the realm of ghostly beings, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the human world, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the deva world."

The diversity shown is according to the place where *kamma* has to be experienced. Then the result of *kamma* is said to be threefold.

"Monks, I say that the result of *kamma* is of three types:

in this very life, in the next birth, or in a subsequent birth."

The fifth point – the cessation of *kamma* is explained briefly:

"Monks, the cessation of contact is the cessation of *kamma*."

This is understandable. Since the origin of *kamma* is contact, its cessation has to be with the cessation of contact itself. Lastly comes the way of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma*. It is said to be the Noble Eightfold Path. In this way there is a six-fold analysis given in that context.

There are many other discourses on *kamma* some of which we will bring up as we go on. Now according to the doctrine of the *Nigaṇṭhas* there are three types of *kamma* – namely bodily *kamma*, verbal *kamma* and mental *kamma* out of which they give first place to bodily *kamma*. But according to the Buddha mental *kamma* takes precedence. It is clearly stated in the *Upāli Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* where the Buddha tells *Dīgatapassi* – the disciple of *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta* that mental *kamma* is more serious. One can understand the reason for it even from the first verse of the Dhammapada:

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā

mano seṭṭhā manomayā

manasā ce paduṭṭhena

bhāsati vā karoti vā

tato naṁ dukkhamanveti

cakkaṁ va vahato padaṁ

Mind is the forerunner of mind-objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made

If with a mind corrupt with hate

One speaks or does an act

Then suffering trails him close behind

Like the wheel the ox that draws the cart.

The primacy of the mind is emphasized in the Dhamma whereas the *Nigaṇṭhas* give first place to the body. Because of this primacy of the mind, if one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, one has to suffer the consequences. Morally culpable deeds are by definition intentioned. It is because the *Nigaṇṭhas* did not recognize the relevance of intention that they went to the extreme of self-mortification. The reason for the Buddha's Middle Path is the identification of *kamma* with intention.

Another important discourse portraying the results of *kamma* is the *Devadūta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. As you may have heard it is a discourse preached as a sermon by the

Venerable Arahant Mahinda in *Anuradhapura* to acquaint the people of this island with the dreadful consequences of evil deeds.

In that discourse the Buddha first of all analyzes the way in which beings are born in various realms according to their good and bad conduct. There he mentions heavenly realm, human world, the realm of ghostly beings, the animal realm and lastly hell. However it is about the hell that the Buddha describes in particular in this discourse. The Buddha gives a vivid description of the terrible suffering undergone by beings in various hells. That is probably why the Venerable Mahinda preached this discourse to the people of this country. The sutta instils moral dread of this *Saṁsāric* existence. On a Poson Full moon poya day like this we should call to mind such instructive teachings of the Buddha.

Generally such discourses like *Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, which also was preached to the people of this country by Venerable Arahant Mahinda have an appeal to the intellect. But we should consider why he thought of preaching a discourse like *Devadūta Sutta.* He probably wished to wean the people's minds from evil and turn them towards the good and skilful according to the word of the Buddha.

Another important discourse worth mentioning in this context is the *Cūla Kammavibhaṅga Sutta* preached by the Buddha to the Brahmin youth, Subha. There the pre-eminence of *kamma* and its pervasive influence on the lives of beings in *Saṁsāra* is brought out. Subha, the Brahmin youth asks the Buddha why there is a diversity among human beings. He says:

'Some human beings are short-lived, some are long-lived, some have many ailments, some have few ailments, some are ugly, some are comely, some are inferior, some are superior, some are poor, some are rich, some are low-born, some are high-born, some are unwise, some are wise.' He asks the Buddha the reason for this disparity. Then the Buddha comes out with the famous dictum on *kamma*.

"Kammassakā, māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaranā. Kammaṁ satte vibhajati yadidaṁ hīnappaṇītatāya."

"Young man, beings are owners of their *kamma*, they have *kamma* as their inheritance, *kamma* is their origin, *kamma* is their relative, they have *kamma* as their resort. *Kamma* differentiates beings as inferior or superior."

'Kammassakā':

What one can call one's own is *kamma*.

'*Kammadāyādā':*

What one inherits is one's own *kamma*.

'*kammayoni':*

The place of one's birth is also decided by *kamma*.

'*kammabandhu':*

Kamma is one's true relative.

‘*kammapaṭisaranā’:*

Kamma is one’s resort in *Saṁsāra.*

Kamma is also responsible for the distinction as high or low among beings.

Therefore, the Buddha has recommended the constant reflection of this pervasive influence of *kamma* as a means to refrain from misconduct in the *Ṭhāna Sutta* as follows:

“*Kammassakomhi*

kammadāyādo

kammayoni

kammabandhu

kammapaṭisarano.

Yaṁ kammaṁ karissāmi kalyānaṁ vā pāpakaṁ vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi.”

“I am the owner of my *kamma*. I am the inheritor of my *kamma*. *Kamma* is my matrix. *Kamma* is my relative. *Kamma* is my resort. Whatever *kamma* I do whether good or bad I will be its inheritor.”

Though it is stated like that there is in this Dhamma a way of freedom from *kamma*. On the other hand *Nigaṇṭhas* or Jains had an extreme view of *kamma*. They held that everything is due to past *kamma*. (*Sabbaṁ pubbekatahetu*) and put down all pleasures and pains one experiences now to things done in the past. Therefore, they advocated self-mortification as a means of paying off past *kamma* – a way of practice called ‘*nijjarā’* – ‘wearing out’; They also observed rigorous vows and ascetic practices in order to prevent accumulation of new *kamma*. The Buddha sometimes interrogated the *Nigaṇṭhas* and refuted their views. He asked whether they can keep an account of *kamma* so far ‘paid off’ and ‘to be paid off’, thereby proving that the wanton infliction of bodily pain on oneself is meaningless.

In fact, there were other extreme views on *kamma* in the contemporary society. They were sometimes put forward within the framework of a tetralemma or four-cornered logic. Some – like the *Nigaṇṭhas* – held the view that all pleasure and pain one experiences is of one’s own making (*sayaṁ kataṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*). Some others said it is done by others (*paraṁ kataṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*). Yet others combined these two views and said that it is done by both oneself and others (*sayaṁ katañca paraṁ katañca sukhadukkhaṁ*). Still others rejected both self agency and external agency and asserted that pleasure and pain one experiences is of fortuitous origin. (*adhicca samuppannaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ).*

The Buddha rejected all four types of view and introduced the correct view by declaring that *kamma* is dependently arisen (*paṭicca samuppannaṁ).* As he sometimes put it:

“*Kim paṭicca*? *Phassaṁ paṭicca”.*

*"*Dependent on what? Dependent on contact."

So the correct position is this. It is not a case of selfagency nor of external agency nor both nor neither but due to contact (*Phassaṁ paṭicca).* The term '*paṭicca'* represents *paṭiccasamuppāda* and negates the idea of fortuitous origin fairly and squarely. (Cp. The two terms: *adhicca-samuppanna* and *paṭicca-samuppanna).* That is why the Buddha concludes:

"Monks the cessation of contact is the cessation of *kamma*."

Now we are going deeper and deeper. But in the traditional analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* an unfortunate trend is seen though it cannot be compared to the *Nigaṇṭha* view.

As you know there are 12 links in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula. In the *Visuddhi Magga* and other later works these 12 links are divided into three periods of time in the analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda.* Ignorance and preparations are said to belong to the past. The eight links – consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and becoming are included in the present. Birth and decay and death are referred to the future. The attempt is to prove that consciousness has arisen from a past cause. We have already shown that this explanation is untenable.

The most important point in the formula is the vortex between consciousness and name and form. Even from the Buddha's analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the term *saṅkhāra* is defined in a way quite different from later definitions of the same term. Later analysis interpreted *saṅkhāra* as equivalent to *kamma*. But that is not the way the Buddha explained *saṅkhāra* in that context. He says:

"Katame ca bhikkhave saṅkhārā? tayoṁe bhikkhave saṅkhāra. Kāyasaṅkhāro, vacīsaṅkhāro, cittasaṅkhāro. Ime vuccanti bhikkhave saṅkhāra."

"And what, monks, are preparations? Monks, there are these three preparations. Body preparation, speech preparation, thought preparation. These, monks, are called preparations."

It is noteworthy that in this definition, the term *saṅkhāra* is used in the singular as *Kāyasaṅkhāro* (body preparation)*, vacīsaṅkhāro* (speech preparation*)* and *cittasaṅkhāro* (thought preparation). These three are defined in the Dhamma as follows:

Body preparation – in breath and outbreath

Speech preparation – thinking and pondering

Thought preparation – perception and feeling

So then in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* where the Buddha defines each of the twelve links, the term *saṅkhāra* is defined as threefold. In breathing and out breathing cannot be taken as *kamma* that prepares another birth. Likewise thinking and pondering generally rendered as initial and sustained thought as well as perception and feeling are not reckoned as *kamma*. In fact whoever is wishing to put an end to existence (*bhava*) has to appease them. That is why they are called preparations.

Another instance of misinterpretation is the definition of consciousness. In the *Visuddhi Magga* and other later treatises consciousness is defined as 're-linking consciousness' (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*) resulting from so-called '*saṅkhāras'* interpreted as past *kamma*. In other words it is supposed to be the outcome of past ignorance and preparations. Such an interpretation is unwarranted since the Buddha himself has defined consciousness as being sixfold in that particular context, in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta.*

"*Katamañca bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ. Chayime bhikkhave viññāṇakāyā. Cakkhu viññāṇaṁ sotaviññāṇaṁ ghānaviññāṇaṁ jivhāviññāṇaṁ kāyaviññāṇaṁ manoviññāṇaṁ. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ."*

"And what, monks, is consciousness? Monks, there are these six groups (lit. bodies) of consciousness. Eyeconsciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongueconsciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. These monks are called consciousness."

Since *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are defined as above by the Buddha, by no means can they be referred to the past. We have pointed out that all the twelve links pertain to the present.

Of course one may ask:

"Well then where do ignorance and preparations come in? That we have already explained. The very non-understanding of the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is itself ignorance. The activity sustained by that ignorance is preparations. To go back to our parable of *Narcissus* – that Greek youth Narcissus who imagined an angel in the reflection of his own face in the water, was tempted to embrace it again and again by that ignorance – that murk of delusion. So also are the worldlings. What we have in ignorance and preparations is the background or setting. The crucial point however, is the vortex between consciousness and name and form – that vortical interplay or mutual inter-relation. That is something pertaining to the present. That precisely, is why it is possible to put an end to suffering here and now by experiencing the cessation of becoming or existence. We mentioned all this in particular because there is some confusion in explaining *kamma* in the context of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* by attributing it to something in the past.

However one can still raise a question regarding the significance of what are called '*puññābhisaṅkhāra*, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra* and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* and their relevance to *saṅkhāra:*

In that context, what is called '*abhisaṅkhāra'* are special preparations, that is to say, specially performed *kamma*. In the former context, *saṅkhāra* referred to such activities as inbreathing and out-breathing which are like the 'bedrock' of *saṅkhāras.* But here what is called *abhisaṅkhāra* are volitional preparations where intention comes in. *Puññābhisaṅkhāra* are meritorious special preparations, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra* are demeritorious special preparations and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* are imperturbable special preparations, which have to do with the meditative absorptions – which bring about rebirth in Brahma worlds. Of course these three forms of preparations are also the outcome of ignorance, but by dispelling that ignorance in this very life those forces of preparations are stilled. These special preparations are kept up by egotism. All in all, *kamma* is dependently arisen. Our aim should be the cessation of *kamma*.

The path of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma* is the Noble Eightfold Path. As you know the Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path is the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its arising,

cessation and the path to that cessation. But there is another Right View called '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' – the Right View that has *kamma* as one's own. It is the Right View which has ten points (*dasa vatthuka*) namely:

gifts, donations and offerings are not worthless. There is fruit and result of wholesome and unwholesome actions. There is this world and there is the next world. There is mother, there is father. There are in this world recluses and Brahmins of right practice who have by themselves understood and realized both this world and the next and are able to explain them. This Right View of ten points is called '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' because in the context of *Saṁsāra,* this is the view which helps beings to avoid rebirth in bad bournes and win rebirth in heavenly realms.

That view which asserts just the opposite of these ten points is called a pervert view. You all can guess what it is like. It says for instance, gifts, donations, and offerings are worthless; there is no fruit or result in wholesome and unwholesome actions. There is no this world no next world and so on.

The term '*kammassakatā*' has a deep meaning. It means 'taking *kamma* as one's own'. This is where 'the prominent and intrusive middle finger' (that is intention) has to pay with responsibility for his prominence and intrusion – to hark back to our simile of the five fingers. Due to that prominence and intrusion one may do merit or demerit or attain *jhānic* states. From a supramundane 'point of view' even the high *jhānic* attainments of *Āḷāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* are of no account. That is why the Buddha left them with dejection. Deliverance from *Saṁsāra* is not to be found in *puññā – apuññā* and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* (meritorious, demeritorious and imperturbable special preparations). However they have their relevance in *Saṁsāra.* One should give up what is demeritorious and develop the meritorious and above all the imperturbable. They are useful for the development of the mind. But for deliverance from *Saṁsāra* there is only the Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, Supramundane Noble Eightfold Path. You mustn't confuse the two views.

Some intellectuals dismiss the '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' as irrelevant and say that there is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father and so on calling it '*suññatā*' or voidness. That is going to an extreme. The Buddha calls it a pervert view. Worldlings if they blunder end up in hell. If one trains in the view that is based on the recognition of one's responsibility for one's deeds, one could at least get rebirth in heavens because one knows the results of good and evil and trains accordingly. But in the last analysis all these are preparations. Therefore, the final aim should be the release from preparations.

As we pointed out our aspiration should be the cessation of becoming – *bhava nirodha*. In the journey towards that cessation of becoming, the Buddha had to take a Middle Path.

The Right View which takes *kamma* as one's own (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi)* has its place in that Middle Path. He did not go to an extreme to approve a pervert view like Annihilationists who even went to the extreme of self-indulgence. As the Buddha proclaims in the *Devadūta Sutta* he could see beings getting reborn in heavens and hells according to their *kamma* as if someone standing between two houses would see human beings entering and leaving those houses. So if that is the position it cannot be contradicted. That is the situation in the world.

It is due to that condition in the world that the Buddha recognized the relevance of a Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own. We should now pay attention to this aspect too because some have confused issues. Of course from a deeper perspective what is helpful in attaining deliverance is the Noble Eightfold Path. It is based on the view that this is an entire mass of suffering. There is no question of oneself or another. But in truth that vision arises only at the moment of the Supramundane Path. Although it comes in to some extent even before it, only at the moment of the Supramundane Path moment it rightly surfaces. We brought up these deeper aspects to show that the analysis of the twelve links according to the three periods of time is incorrect and that *kamma* is conditionally arisen. (*Paṭicca Samuppanna)* Since *kamma* is conditionally arisen release from *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is tantamount to release from *Saṁsāra.*

Kamma is dependently arisen due to not seeing the Law of Dependent Arising. Therefore, to see it is to be free from it. In other words, the wrong course of action is the result of not seeing the inter-dependence between consciousness and name and form. Comprehension of it dispels the darkness of ignorance. In short, in the light of wisdom the vanity of that course of action is realized.

This then, is the supramundane freedom – the deliverance from *Saṁsāra.* As far as this Middle Path is concerned, it is obvious that the Buddha avoided both extremes, namely that of the *Nigaṇṭhas* and that of the Annihilationists. The Middle Path shown by the Buddha is extraordinary in that it implies the twofold Right View to enable beings in *Saṁsāra* to avoid bad bournes and get rebirth in heavens and gradually to leave behind both hell and heaven and attain final deliverance from *Saṁsāra.* On one side there is the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own and on the other there are the Four Noble Truths that lead one out of *Saṁsāra.*

There are a number of discourses in which the Buddha has preached about *kamma*. There is for instance, a very important sutta which shows the connection between *kamma* and views with an instructive simile. He declares that in the case of a person with a wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal or mental *kamma* he performs follows the pattern of the wrong view he has taken up and accepted, and whatever intention, aspiration, determination and preparations he has (*yā ca cetanā yā ca patthanā yo ca paṇidhi, ye ca saṅkhārā*) all those things will conduce to unwelcome, unpleasant, disagreeable, unwholesome and painful consequences because the view is evil. Then the Buddha gives a simile for it that you can easily understand.

When a margosa seed or a *kosātakī* seed or a bitter pumpkin seed is planted on wet ground, whatever essence of earth or essence of water it absorbs, all that will conduce to bitterness, gives a bitter fruit. Similarly in the case of one who has taken up a wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal or mental *kamma* he has, all that produces a bitter and unpleasant result. On the other hand, in the case of a person who has right view, all his bodily, verbal and mental *kamma* – all intentions, aspirations and determinations he has, all that gives a sweet fruit and brings happiness. The simile given in that case is:

Just as a sugar-cane seedling, a sweet paddy seed or a grape seed when planted on wet ground whatever essence of earth or essence of water it absorbs, all that gives a sweet fruit. This shows the importance of the correctness of views. That is why we should always try to avoid wrong views and going to extremes. From the worldly point of view that Right View which takes *kamma* as one's own is helpful in the context of *Saṁsāra.* But when one is thinking of transcending the world what is helpful is the Noble Eightfold Path. Then there is no reference to

persons. No talk of oneself or another. Just a whole mass of suffering. What is called the Five Aggregates of grasping is a mass of suffering. The cause of it is craving. The aim is the cessation of craving. The path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. One should not mix up the two types of Right View. The Buddha has pointed out both because they pertain to the Middle Path. That is as far as views are concerned. There are many deep discourses on this subject, which are not easily understood.

On one occasion the Buddha addressing the monks, said:

"Monks, I shall preach to you the new and old *kamma*. What, monks, is old *kamma*? The eye, monks, is old *kamma* specially prepared (*abhisaṅkhātaṁ*) and specially intentioned (*abhisañcetayitaṁ)* which should be known as something to be experienced. ('*vedanīyaṁ daṭṭabbaṁ').* So also are the other senses – the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. That means the senses are the product of our own *kamma*. Then what is called 'new *kamma*' is what one performs now by body speech and mind. So it is a fact that this being with his senses is produced by *kamma*. But one has to get free even from these senses that are the product of *kamma*, sometime or other. It is that freedom that on several occasions we pointed out as something realizable here and now. In the end when describing the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood, it is said that the eye ceases and the perception of forms fade away, the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fade away and so on. Even the six senses which are produced by the force of our intentions and *kamma* generated in *Saṁsāra* can be made to cease in this very world. It is an experience of cessation realizable here and now. That is what has been called the cessation of the six sense spheres ('*saḷāyatana nirodha').* By seeing it as a fact of experience the arahants realize a state of freedom from all the six senses that are made up or prepared by *kamma*. Through it one can understand what is called the release from the prepared (*saṅkhāta),* which in other words is '*asaṅkhāta'* – the Unprepared.

The Buddha has pointed out that beings have *kamma* as their own (*kammassakā).* Because of the responsibility for one's actions which is the result of ignorance and craving, one has to suffer the consequences. That is a norm common even to Buddhas and Arahants. As you all know, even Venerable *Mahā Moggallāna* had to undergo the result of a bad *kamma* he had committed in the distant past by killing his parents. This body is the product of our *kamma*. As a way of saying we call it the work of *Māra.* It is as if *Māra* has given us this body with a curse:

'you suffer!'; That is why in explaining what 'old *kamma*' is the Buddha said:

"*cakkhuṁ bhikkhave purānaṁ kammaṁ abhisaṅkhataṁ abhisañcetayitaṁ vedaniyaṁ daṭṭhabbaṁ"*

"The eye, monks, is old *kamma* specially prepared and specially intentioned which should be known as something to be experienced."

The eye, for instance, is something given to us 'to suffer', though we take pride in our eye. That is what the Buddha is telling us. Just think of one who has no eyes – a blind man deprived of vision. Or take the case of a person with only one eye. See how much they suffer. So also are the other senses. These are the results of our *kamma*. But we have to transcend them. It is for that purpose that we need the Noble Eightfold Path.

Then there are the three kinds of 'preparations' (*saṅkhārā)* –

body preparation (*kāyasaṅkhāro),*

speech preparation (*vacīsaṅkhāro)* and

thought preparation *(cittasaṅkhāro*).

Why are in-breathing and out-breathing regarded as a body preparation? It is because they prepare the body. No one can be blamed for breathing in and breathing out. However ignorance and craving are hidden beneath them. That is why every Buddha is said to have attained Buddhahood through Mindfulness of Breathing. There is something wonderful about it. Worldlings even entertain absurd views of self by taking it as '*prāna'* the principle of life. But the Buddha pointed out that this process of in-breathing and out-breathing which is an illustration of arising and ceasing is itself a suffering. Worldlings are ignorant of it. They are sometimes not even aware that they are breathing. They take it for granted. Only the outward activities which we called '*abhi-saṅkhāra'* – 'special preparations' they take seriously. That is what appears prominently like that fraction of the iceberg visible above the surface. Like the vast portion submerged is the above mentioned body-preparation (*kāyasaṅkhāro).* In-breathing and out-breathing are *kāyasaṅkhāro* in the sense that they prepare the body for activity. Similarly thinking and pondering are *vacīsaṅkhāro* – speech preparation. There is far more thinking and pondering going on within a person than what comes out in speech. In fact, '*vitakka-vicāra'* can be regarded as sub-vocal speech. It is after a good deal of thinking and pondering that one breaks into speech. That again is like the submerged portion of an iceberg. That is a 'preparation for speech'.

Then there are the perceptions and the feelings, which prepare our thoughts and intentions. In the final reckoning they also have to be conquered. They have to be appeased or stilled. As you may have heard, when one is developing meditative absorptions one has to calm down thinking and pondering at some stage. Then he finds even breathing troublesome and calms that too. And finally he has to calm down perceptions and feelings. That is what the Buddha revealed to the world by the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings. Until then the worldlings found their progress blocked by perceptions and were unable to make a breakthrough. That was due to egoism – the notion of 'I' and 'mine'. The Buddha showed the way to deliverance through the cessation of perceptions and feelings. It seems, Therefore, that there is a subtle level of preparations which escape our attention. It is incorrect to limit the meaning of '*saṅkhāra'* to *kamma* as such.

The term '*saṅkhāra'* has quite a broad meaning. There are many who interpret the term to mean only *kamma*. But there is a subtle nuance of the term which goes deeper than the implications of *kamma*. That is 'bhava *saṅkhāra'* – the preparations pertaining to existence. They tend to perpetuate existence. In the last analysis even perceptions and feeling are preparations which have to be calmed down. All these the Buddha understood as preparations. Within the dictum:

'*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā'* (All preparations are impermanent) which we take lightly the entire Dhamma is included. All these are a heap of preparations. Not only the *kamma* that is outwardly visible. Even the underlying layers of in-breathing and out-breathing, thinking and pondering, perceptions and feelings have to be calmed down to attain that state of 'the stilling of all preparations' ('*sabba saṅkhāra samatha').*

On the one hand the Buddha has pointed out to beings in *Saṁsāra* the way of moulding their courses of action without involvement in wrong views so as to avoid rebirth in bad bournes and with Right View to get reborn in heavenly realms. On the other hand he has also pointed out the Noble Eightfold Path for transcending both good and evil and winning freedom from the entire heap of preparations. In the latter case it is not a question of persons. It is only a question of this whole mass of suffering. Internally or externally, it is just a case of suffering. What underlies it is craving. The cessation of craving itself is *Nibbāna.* And the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path.

There is a wonderful discourse which describes that state of perfect stilling. There Venerable Sāriputta says:

"Ānanda, when the body is there, due to bodily intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. When speech is there, due to verbal intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. When mind is there, due to mental intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain – all conditioned by ignorance."

But he points out that with the remainderless cessation of ignorance, neither the body nor the speech nor the mind will be there.

"..... avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yam paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Sā vācā na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. So mano na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ.Khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaranaṁ taṁ na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ."

"..... But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, that body is not there owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That speech is not there owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That mind is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain."

Now what does this mean? It is by taking this body as a unit – as my body – that all pleasure and pain arise. We do not understand it as a heap. We take the whole heap as a unit. We do not have an insightful understanding of it as a heap. By taking it as a unit, there is that experience of pleasure and pain. It is the same in the case of speech. Speech involves language. All depends on the meanings we attribute to a language. Supposing we go on scolding a person who doesn't know any language, with a smile on our face. However much we scold him, he wouldn't know that he is being scolded. It is according to the meanings we infuse into some words we use that we experience pleasure and pain. So long as there is speech, in relation to the speech, we experience pleasure and pain. Isn't it the same with what we call the mind? A flux of thoughts that arise and cease we have grasped as a unit called 'the mind' with our personality view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi'*). There comes a time when even that mind ceases. It is as long as we have this mind that we suffer. So it seems this discourse has an extremely deep meaning.

Here is a journey towards the cessation of existence. All the same, we should try to understand why the Buddha has declared that beings in *Saṁsāra* tend to drift towards two extremes – self-indulgence and self-mortification. There is the view of eternalism on one side and the view of annihilationism on the other. If by taking dogmatically the idea that there is a self one holds on

to the view that suffering is of one's own making (*sayaṁ kataṁ dukkhaṁ),* there is no possibility of deliverance.

Due to that view of self one will go on in *Saṁsāra.* If on the contrary, one puts down suffering to fortuitous origin and forgets one's responsibility one will get reborn in hell. The Buddha avoided both these extremes and proclaimed the Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Path. While discussing the Noble Eightfold Path we mentioned the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi)* because it brings out a deep point. In ordinary life worldlings are living with the two sections oneself and others. Therefore, if one through selfishness acts under the influence of the three roots of evil greed, hate and delusion one will end up in hell. Instead of it the Buddha recommends a course of action which is conducive to one's own welfare (*attahita*) as well as to the other's welfare (*parahita*).

Now in the case of virtuous deeds such as observing the moral precepts we see that criterion of taking care of ones own and another's welfare. One may like to kill beings for food or for revenge. One may like to steal. But the Buddha disapproved of it as it means harm to another. Thinking of the society at large the Buddha has pointed out that what is 'skilful' (*kusala*) in such contexts is whatever that is beneficial to both sides. The term '*kusala'* is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. The basic meaning is to be skilful. That 'skill' – so long as one is in *Saṁsāra* – is in avoiding rebirth in miserable realms and in getting reborn in heavenly realms. But to be skilful in the highest sense of the term is to give up both merit and demerit (*puññapāpapahīna*) and get beyond *Saṁsāra* for good. So then the term '*kusala'* has a deeper dimension of meaning than *'puñña'* (merit). Generally both terms are used together in some contexts. For instance in some discourses we find the terms '*puññābhisandā' and 'kusalābhisandā'* (streams of merit and streams of the skilful) used more or less like synonyms. However out of the two terms '*kusala*' is of greater influence and intrinsic worth than *'puñña'.* It is directly connected with the mind.

We started with the roots of the skilful and the unskilful. The roots of the unskilful are greed, hate and delusion. The roots of the skilful are non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion. But have you ever heard of 'roots' of merit and demerit. Is there anything like that? There you are. Now you can understand the essential difference between '*puñña'* and '*kusala'.* '*Kusala'* or skilful has a direct relation to the mind.

The two words '*puñña'* and *'pāpa'* have been used from ancient times to denote deeds with pleasant and unpleasant results. The ten ways of making merit which you are familiar with namely liberality, morality, meditation, dedication of merits, rejoicing in merits, rendering service, honoring, preaching, listening to Dhamma and straightening of one's views – all these are reckoned as ways of making merit. But what is reckoned as skilful are the ten skilful deeds which apparently are negative in formulation for the most part. What is unskilful are killing, stealing, unchastity, lying, slandering, harsh speech, frivolous talk, avarice, ill-will and wrong views. What are called skilful are the abstention from killing, from stealing, from unchastity, from lying, from slandering, from harsh speech, from frivolous talk, non-avarice, non-illwill and right view. In the case of unskilful what is difficult is abstaining. But one has to be skilful in abstaining.

The very distinction between the ten meritorious deeds and the ten skilful deeds shows the difference between '*puñña'* and '*kusala'.* As we mentioned above from the standpoint of the supramundane level, the highest '*kusala*' is to be skilful enough to transcend even the subtlest

preparations that perpetuate existence – that is to say not only merit and evil but also in and out breathing, thinking and pondering, perception and feeling. The Buddha made known to the world a wonderful state of cessation of existence in the attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood in which all that is prepared (*saṅkhata)* even eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are made to cease.

In this age many wrong views about *kamma* are rampant in the world. People are thinking of big things but ignore *kamma*. In fact it is the intellectual approach that is holding sway in the world. Because of this intellectualism there is a neglect of such topics as *kamma* which tendency will eventually pave the way to hell. Venerable Arahant Mahinda did not preach only the *Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta*. He also preached the *Devadūta Sutta* to arouse fear about *Saṁsāra* in the minds of the people. Venerable Mahinda Thera described to our people the dreadful sufferings in hell, which the Buddha had seen with his divine-eye, in order to acquaint them with the distinction between good and bad in conduct. In an age like this you should make it a point to ponder over these things.

Although this is the tenth sermon in our series of sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda,* we dealt with the topic of *kamma* because today happens to be the Poson Poya Day. So on this hallowed day you had better take in whatever that is conducive to the future of the dispensation of the Buddha as well as to your own *Nibbāna* out of this sermon. If by any chance you have any wrong views, if instead of the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own you entertain some pervert or distorted view, you should do well to rectify them. Or else if you have any doubts about the Four Noble Truths, which is basic to the Noble Eightfold Path, try your best to dispel them in the light of this sermon.

We wish that this sermon will help you to understand the Middle Path preached by the Buddha and encourage you all to develop virtue, concentration and wisdom. May that skilful kammic force enable you to attain deliverance from this dreadful *Saṁsāra* as soon as possible. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to the fulfillment of their highest aim – the Deathless Nibbāna!