Paticca Samuppada Sermon 14

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 196)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

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

Idaṁ jātu vedagu – idaṁ jātu sabbaji

idaṁ jātu apalikhataṁ – gaṇḍamūlaṁ palikhaṇinti

This is the perfect mastery of the Veda

This is called victory over all

This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted

– *Uddaka Sutta, Saṁyutta Nikāya*

Dear Listeners,

Any person with an inquiring eye could see that all activities pertaining to the continuum of life of beings in *Saṁsāra* take place within the six sense spheres. The internal sense spheres, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are referred to as *saḷāyatana* in the teaching of the Law of Dependependant Arising. These six internal sense spheres coordinate with the six external sense bases that is external objects, sound, smell, taste, body contact and mental objects (*dhamma*). They attract the worldlings towards the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form.

We have chosen as the topic for this fourteenth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* a verse from the *Uddaka Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. On a certain occasion the Buddha addressing the monks recalled a certain past incident.

"Monks, UddakaRāmaputta used to declare thus:"

"*Idaṁ jātu vedagu – idaṁ jātu sabbaji*

idaṁ jātu apalikhatam – gaṇḍamūlam palikhaṇinti"

Let's go through the meaning first. '*Idaṁ jātu vedagu*' means "This is the perfect mastery of the *Veda*."

"*idaṁ jātu sabbaji*" means "This is called victory over all."

"*Idaṁ jātu apalikhataṁ - gaṇḍamūlaṁ palikhaṇinti*"

“This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted.”

After uttering this verse the Buddha makes an unusual remark.

“Monks, although Uddaka made this joyous utterance, it is only a monk in this dispensation who is qualified to do so.”

Then he proceeds to reinterpret this puzzle-like verse.

“Monks, how does one gain mastery over the *Vedas*? “*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaranañca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti, evaṁ kho bhikkhave bhikkhu vedagu hoti*.”

“To the extent a monk realizes with wisdom, the six spheres of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, to that extent, he will have mastery of the *Vedas.*”

The second question is then taken up.

“Monks, how can one become a *sabbaji*, one who is victorious over all”? Then comes the explanation, similar to the first one.

“*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaranañca, yathābhūtaṁ viditvā anupādāya vimutto hoti.”*

He who realizes with wisdom the six spheres of contact earlier mentioned, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, and will attain release with total detachment, such a person is *sabbaji*, a man who is victorious overall.

“Monks, how can one say that the root of the abscess so far unextracted, has now been extracted?”

This is a more puzzling statement than the earlier two.

“Monks *gaṇḍa* or abscess is a synonym for the body composed of the four primaries earth, water, heat and wind, born of mother and father, composed of gross food, inheriting the quality of impermanence, having the nature of rubbing, massaging, breaking up and scattering”

“What, monks, is the root of the abscess (*gaṇḍamūla*)?”

The root of the abscess is a synonym for craving.

“Monks to what extent can you say that the root of the abscess has been extracted? If a monk has eliminated craving, uprooted it, destroyed it like an uprooted palm, reduced to a state of non-arising, such a monk can be called one who has extracted the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted.”

According to this explanation offered by the Buddha, we see that *vedagu* is a term borrowed from the Brahmins. From a religious point of view it means a person who has reached mastery over all knowledge. According to the specific interpretation of the Buddha, surpassing all knowledge means the perfect realization of the fivefold activity of the six sense spheres. Similarly victory over all refers to the above mentioned perfect realization of the sense spheres

accompanied by the perfect release from all clinging towards them. It is by now clear that both "Mastery over all" and "Victory over all" must be understood in relation to the six sense spheres.

Since we have been referring to '*sabba*' – 'all', I would like to introduce to you the *Sabba Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* for the purpose of supportive proof. *Sabba* means all.

Once the Buddha addressed the monks and said "Monks, I shall explain to you 'all'. Listen to me carefully."

"*Kiñca bhikkhave sabbaṁ? Cakkhuñca rūpāca, sotañca saddā ca, ghānañca gandhā ca, jivhā ca rasā ca, kayo ca phoṭṭhabbā ca, mano ca dhammā ca.*"

"The eye and external objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and body contacts, the mind and mental objects. This is called 'all' – '*sabba*'. Following this explanation the Buddha offers an amazing challenge as follows; "*Yo bhikkhave evaṁ vadeyya*."

Monks if anyone were to say thus,

"*Ahametaṁ sabbaṁ paccakkhāya aññaṁ sabbaṁ paññāpessāmi*" I disprove of that *sabba*, and declare another *sabba* in its place."

"Monks, that would amount to nothing more than foolish prattling. If questioned he would be dumbfounded. Why? Because he has no understanding of the subject."

The Buddha thus confirms the meaning of *sabba*.

We come across another similar explanation in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* itself. Venerable Samiddhi approaches the Buddha with a question.

"*Loko loko ti Bhante vuccati, kittāvatā nu kho bhante loko vā assa lokapaññatti vā ti*." "Lord, reference is made to a world, a world. To what extent is there a world or the manifestation of a world?" The Buddha replies as follows; "*Yattha kho Samiddhi atthi cakkhu, atthi rūpā, atthi cakkhuviññāṇaṁ, atthi cakkhuviññāṇā viññātabbā dhammā, atthi tattha loko vā lokapaññatti vā.*"

Since the detailed explanation of the other senses is similar to that of *cakkhu*, let us confine our explanation to *cakkhu*. You will understand the rest.

"Samiddhi, wherever an eye is present, and external objects are present, visual consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world."

This is followed by the description of other sense organs and lastly the mind.

"Samiddhi wherever a mind is present, mental objects are present, mind consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through mind consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world."

Now, he explains the reverse of it.

“Samiddhi, wherever the eye does not exist, external forms do not exist, eye consciousness does not exist, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness do not exist, there exists neither a world nor the manifestation of a world.”

This explanation indicates that there is a state where the six sense spheres become non-existent.

Let us now change over to a *Sutta* we have often referred to earlier, the first *Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. It’s the *Brahmajāla Sutta* that casts a net over sixty two views by way of rejecting them. After a critical review of these views the Buddha says that whatever views exist then, whatever views existed in the past, and whatever views may arise in the future, can be categorized under these sixty two views. Then the Buddha has some interesting comment to make about the formulators of these views.

“Monks, all those ascetics and Brahmins who hold views under these sixty two categories, ... to quote the Pāli words “*sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti.”*The different views they declare are based on various sense contacts they experience through the sense spheres.

What is the outcome of formulating views based on feelings gained through sense spheres? *Vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ, upādāna paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa soka parideva*.”

To them, from feeling as condition there arises craving, from craving as condition there arises grasping, from grasping as condition there arises becoming, from becoming as condition there arises birth, from birth as condition there arises decay, death, grief, lamentation. Since all these views have sprung up from feelings generated through contact with sense spheres, the ascetics and Brahmins who profess them are led from feeling to craving, from craving to grasping, from grasping to becoming. You see, they have no escape from *Saṁsāra*.

Next the discussion turns towards the identification of the real monk. In defining the term *vedagu* as ‘one who has mastery over all’ ascetics and Brahmins have based their interpretation on views. But the Buddha’s declaration is founded on a different footing.

“*channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayaṁ ca atthagamaṁ ca assādaṁ ca ādīnavaṁ ca nissaraṇaṁ ca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti. Ayaṁ imehi sabbeheva uttarītaraṁ pajānāti.”*

At any time in my dispensation a monk who understands with wisdom, the six bases of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, he far excels those others in his wisdom.”

That is how the Buddha explains the word *vedagu*.

The discussion about *Saḷāyatana* continues further. There is another *Sutta* similar to the *Sabba Sutta* mentioned earlier. On this occasion the Buddha takes the monks by surprise by addressing them thus:

“*Dvayaṁ vo bhikkhave desessāmī*”

Monks I will teach you ‘two’. What are the two?

"*Cakkhuñceva rūpā ca, sotañceva saddā ca, ghānañceva gandhā ca, jivhāceva rasā ca, kāyoceva poṭṭhabbā ca, manoceva dhammā ca.*"

Each internal sense organ is stated together with its external sense object, the eye with forms, the ear with sounds, the nose with smells, the tongue with tastes, the body with body contacts and the mind with mental objects.

Here too the Buddha's challenge vibrates:

"This is the 'two'. Anyone who says there is another 'two' apart from this, is only jabbering away like a fool. He cannot prove it."

It is further confirmed by the *Dvayaṁ Sutta* as well.

In this discussion about *saḷāyatana*, we made reference to *saḷāyatana nirodha*."

We have time and again explained in our discourses, that *Nibbāna* means the release from the six sense spheres in this world itself. It is the same as *nissaraṇa*. Now you see that cessation of the six sense spheres – *saḷāyatana nirodha* – is attainable within this life. That realization dawns within the *Arahatphala samāpatti*. *Nibbāna* is really the attainment of that *samāpatti*.

Now I wish to switch over to another *sutta* to continue my explanation . After the evening retreat Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came to meet Ven Sāriputta one day. He asked him a very complicating question indeed. "Friend Sāriputta, *channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ asesa virāga nirodhā atthaññaṁ kiñci?*"

"At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, is there anything else left?" Venerable Sāriputta rejects the question altogether by saying "*māhevaṁ āvuso*"

"Do not ask thus."

But Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita pursued his questioning.

"At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, isn't there anything else left?" Venerable Sāriputta's response was the same as earlier.

The third question was a combination of the first two questions. Is there and isn't there anything else left? That alternative was also rejected by Venerable Sāriputta. The final question was "At the total cessation of the six spheres is there anything that neither exists nor non-exists."

Venerable Sāriputta again said "*māhevaṁ āvuso."*

Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita plainly asked him "Friend, how can I understand what you say?"

Now comes Venerable Sāriputta's explanation. If one says that at the total cessation of the six sense spheres of contact there is something left, it would amount to – here he uses an unusual word – *appapañcaṁ papañceti*. I have explained this word *papañca* on earlier occasions to you. '*Appapañcaṁ papañceti*' means using linguistic jargon in an inappropriate place. Seeing it at depth, it is proliferating or arguing where argument must not take place.

The question whether there remains anything at the total cessation of the six sense spheres is in itself flawed. So are all the dilemmas and the quadrilemmas. They are all proliferations of theorists, as we have often reminded you.

That is why Venerable Sāriputta rejected them all as irrelevant. All four aspects of the argument are labeled as '*appapañcaṁ papañceti*', 'proliferating where proliferation must not take place'.

And finally he concludes by saying "*Yāvatā āvuso channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ gati, tāvatā papañcassa gati. Yāvatā papañcassa gati, tāvatā channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ gati*."

"Friend, as far as the six sense spheres reach, that far the proliferation reaches. As far as the proliferation reaches, that far the six sense spheres reach."

"*Channaṁ āvuso phassāyatanānaṁ asesa virāga nirodhā papañcanirodho papañcavūpasamo*."

"Friend, with the total cessation of the six sense spheres, proliferation ceases, proliferation pacifies."

Papañcanirodha is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Proliferation is impossible where the six sense spheres have ceased. We can see this *sutta* is extremely enlightening although it is deep.

In order to delve a little deeper into the subject, I wish to recall another *sutta* very briefly for our purpose. At the end of a discourse the Buddha once spoke thus to the Monks.

"*Tasmātiha Bhikkhave, se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati, rūpasaññā ca virajjati. se āyatane veditabbe, yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati*." It goes on in a similar strain. I shall explain the first. You must try to understand the rest.

"Monks, Therefore, this sphere should be understood, this sphere which is very unusual. The eye is extinct there. Perception of external forms fade away. The ear is extinct. Sounds fade away. The nose is extinct. Smells fade away."

He continues until he winds up with "*mano ca nirujjhati, dhammasaññā ca virajjati."*

The mind is extinct. Perception of cognizable objects fade away. Thereby the Buddha finally firmly establishes the fact that "this sphere must be understood, this sphere must be understood."

After this brief admonition, the Buddha leaves the assembly and withdraws to the monastery. He left his statements unexplained. The monks thought "The Buddha left us steeped in an unexplained puzzle. Perhaps we could seek a clarification from Venerable Ānanda who has been often complimented by the Buddha for his lucid explanations."

When the puzzle was presented to Venerable Ānanda, he though reluctantly, responded thus.

"Well, let me give my brief comments to the problem, the way I understand it:

Saḷāyatana nirodhaṁ kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitam."

"Friends, the Buddha has spoken with reference to the cessation of the six sense spheres."

Earlier we have explained that *saḷāyatana nirodha* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Here the Buddha refers to the cessation of the six spheres as a special *āyatana*. This has often posed a problem to the scholars.

It is now clear that crossing over this world is the extinction of the *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It is a state where one acquires mastery over all. There are many more references to this attainment in the texts. On one occasion, two giant tuskers in wisdom, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita and Venerable Sāriputta, accost each other over a very subtle doctrinal issue. You must understand that their discussions are done solely for our benefit. Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita questions.

"The *saṁyojanas* or fetters are bonds. Is the eye bonded by external forms, or are external forms bonded by the eye? Is the ear bonded by sounds, or are sounds bonded by the ear? Is the nose bonded by the smells or are the smells bonded by the nose?" He goes on and lastly asks "Is the mind bonded by cognizable objects or are cognizable objects bonded by the mind?" Venerable Sāriputta's response was as follows; "No friend, the eye is not bonded by external forms, neither are forms bonded by the eye. The ear is not bonded by sounds, neither are sounds bonded by the ear. But if lustful sensuality arises dependent on those two, that is the bond."

Next in order to illustrate this point, he cites an example.

"In case, friend, a black ox and a white ox are tethered by the same chain, one cannot say that the black ox is bonded by the white ox or the white one is bonded by the black one, which statements are both inapplicable. The bond is the chain between them. Similarly friend, the eye is not bonded by forms, neither are external forms bonded by the eye. The bond is the lustful sensuality that is generated between the two. The bond is attachment."

Let me bring in another episode by way of a simile. I know you like stories. This was related to a group of monks on a certain occasion.

"Monks, one evening, a certain tortoise crossed the river, and was going in search of food. At the same time a fox was also walking about in search of food. The tortoise saw the fox at a distance and withdrew his limbs and head into the shell. He lay there as good as dead. The fox too saw the tortoise and kept guard by him hoping to snatch off a limb the moment one comes out. But the tortoise continued his vigil, remaining perfectly still. The fox was compelled to give up hopes and depart.

Next comes the comparison.

"Monks, remember that Māra is keeping constant vigil over you just like that fox, hoping to break in through your eye, or to break in through your ear."

The Buddha teaches the technique of guarding oneself from the Māra. He brings in the secret of restraining one's senses, as he often does.

"*Cakkhunā rūpam disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti, nānubyañjanaggāhī hoti*."

"Monks, on seeing an external object do not take in its characteristics or occupy yourself with its attributes."

The two terms *nimitta* and *anubyañjana* have to be differentiated. To cite an example, seeing an attractive form is *nimittaggāhī*, being drawn towards it, observing more attributes that make the form attractive is *anubyañjana*. That is *nimittaggāhī* and *anubyañjanaggāhī*. Here the Buddha tries to explain the results of getting attracted to form and searching for more of its attractive attributes. It generates influxes and leads one to deterioration.

"If monks, you keep the six doors closed, Māra will withdraw defeated."

Due to that restraint of the senses, one could avoid committing evil actions through the six sense doors, like the tortoise who keeps his limbs withdrawn.

Next see the beauty of that simile converted into verse by the Buddha.

Kummova aṇgāni sake kapāle samodahaṁ bhikkhu manovitakke anissito aññamaheṭhayāno parinibbuto na upavadeyya kañci Just as a tortoise withdraws his head and limbs into its shell, a monk withdraws into himself against the mental reflections that are generated by the five sense bases – with the eye chasing behind visual objects and the ear chasing behind auditory objects etc. He keeps guard over the sense bases. Then '*anissito aññamaheṭhayāno*' he does not lean against anything and '*na upavadeyya*' does not blame anybody, does not harass anybody. '*Parinibbuto*' He attains extinction.

Here we see that with reference to sense restraint the Buddha has taught the path leading to cessation or the total departure from the six sense spheres. When we touch on *saḷāyatana*, the topic of contact crops up. Since we have referred to the spheres of contact when discussing the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, I think the following *sutta* will be of interest to you, though deep in meaning.

The monk Moḷiya Phagguṇa asked the Buddha "*ko nu kho bhante phusati*?" "Lord, who is it that touches?" This monk, due to his notion of self, seems to imagine there is a person who touches. The Buddha replies,

"I do not say there is anyone who touches. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. But since I do not say so, your question should be "*kimpaccayā nu kho bhante phasso*?"

The Buddha corrects the question Moḷiya Phagguṇa had asked.

"Dependent on what is contact Sir?"

It is not appropriate to refer to 'anybody' touching.

"And my answer would be *Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*."

"Dependent on the six sense spheres is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling."

Feeling being a new topic for Moḷiya Phagguṇa, he got hold of it for further probing.

He questioned "*ko nu kho bhante vedeti*?" Who is it Lord, who feels?"

Again the Buddha replied,

"I do not say a person feels. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. Since my statement is different, your question is inapropriate. This is how you should have questioned me.

"*Kiṁpaccayā nu kho bhante vedanā*?" Conditioned by what, Lord, is feeling? If you put the question in that form, I would answer thus:

Phassa paccayā vedanā, *vedanā paccayā taṇhā*."

The Buddha introduced a term hitherto unspoken of that is *taṇhā*. Being in a questioning mood, Moḷiya Phagguṇa's immediate response was "Lord, who is it that craves?".

This is the Buddha's reply:

"I do not say that anyone does the craving. The appropriate question would be "*Kiṁ paccayā nu kho bhante taṇhā*?" and the Buddha continues in his own style "*vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ."*

Concealed within this style of replying is something amazing. Please try to understand its significance. I shall explain it with a simile. Imagine an artist who wishes to draw a link in a chain. If he draws only one solitary link, identifying it would be difficult, don't you think? He has to at least draw half of a link on either side, for the chain to take shape. Now I hope you understand why the Buddha added an extra link which Moḷiya Phagguṇa did not inquire about. It is to make him realize that this is a chain.

Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso"

'Dependent on the six sense spheres contact comes to be'. The Buddha did not stop at that. He introduced *phassa paccayā vedanā*. I am sure you understand that the Buddha very effectively introduces the Law of Dependent Arising at each link. He overstepped the valid answer by annexing *vedanā* to his explanation. Venerable Moḷiya Phagguṇa got caught up in it. The Buddha led him on to *tanhā* and finally to *upādana*. Ultimately it shows that, whatever we speak in day to day usage, the Buddha firmly makes explicit the depth of the reality of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. No one does the contacting. From *saḷāyatana* arises contact, *phassa*. From *phassa* arises feeling – *vedanā*. So it continues. You see what an important *sutta* this is.

If we were to go deeper into the subject, I am reminded of an occasion where a group of monks relate an experience of theirs to the Buddha. "Lord, certain ascetics and Brahmins in other sects ask us "For what purpose do you lead the higher life under the Buddha? What is the aim of your renunciation? Then Lord we reply like this 'We have renounced for the realization of *dukkha*, suffering. Our aim is to understand *dukkha*.' Lord, in replying so, are we speaking in accordance with your teaching, or are we contradicting you? We have come to you for clarification."

The Buddha replies,

"Well done monks. Your replies are perfectly correct. Suppose they ask you what this *dukkha* is that you wish to realize, then you must reply as follows."

To put it in English "The eye is suffering, material forms are suffering. Eye consciousness is suffering. Eye contact is suffering, all the feelings both pleasant and unpleasant that arise through eye contact are suffering."

You have to understand the other sense spheres similarly. You know quite well that under the four Noble Truths, the five aggregates of grasping are referred to as *dukkha*. Here the Buddha explains *dukkha* in terms of *saḷāyatana*, instead of the *pañca upādānakkhandha*. It exposes the nature of suffering with the six sense spheres.

There are several *sutta*s of this nature that try to reveal the impermanent nature of the *saḷāyatana*s. One is the *Dutiya Dvayaṁ Sutta* which closely follows the *Dvayaṁ Sutta* we discussed earlier. There the Buddha declares "*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti*."

Monks the consciousness arises dependent on two. It does not arise without a cause. Two come together to give rise to consciousness.

"*Cakkhuṁ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu viññāṇaṁ*." Dependent on the eye and the visual object, there arises visual consciousness. In a similar manner, the ear and sound give rise to auditory consciousness. Each consciousness is dependently arisen. It goes to prove that always "arising takes place dependent on two."

The next important statement is "*tiṇṇaṁ saṁgati phasso*".

The implication here is quite deep. Let us discuss it now. The eye consciousness arises depending on the eye and the material object. Not being aware of this dependent nature, not being able to understand it, the moment it is treated as 'three' it becomes contact. Based on the eye and form, there arises eye consciousness. But at this point if it is treated as three,

"*tiṇṇaṁ saṁgati phasso*" then, contact arises. This is a very deep aspect of *phassa*, contact. We usually say "somebody touched" in ordinary language, being ignorant of reality as it is. But here it is specifically explained that contact does not arise devoid of a dependent cause. We have repeatedly reminded you that an unspecified *viññāna* does not arise just as a fire does not arise without a dependent cause. If it is consciousness, it has to be either eye consciousness, or ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness or lastly mind consciousness. But you must remember, neither of these is stored up somewhere. They arise with the coming together of two. That is where the '*dvayaṁ*' interpretation comes in. That alone is the secret in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Fire never arises on its own independently. Whatever causes a fire, that fire is identified by that name. A fire caused by paper or firewood or straw or paddy husk is identified each by the dependent cause. Similarly, a consciousness caused by the eye and the material form coming together is identified as *cakkhu viññāṇa*, visual consciousness.

But due to ignorance, or foolishness, if one does not heed the fact that eye consciousness arises dependent on those two causes, and treats everything as 'one', he would see 'contact' as real, and give chase behind the illusory image. The eye is here, the material form is there. He runs after the mirage. This explains a very deep aspect of consciousness.

Now we have explored several aspects of the useful topic *saḷāyatana*. We told you at the outset that one has to know the dependent causes of arising in order to get a perfect understanding of

the *saḷāyatana*. So also one has to know their cessation, their satisfaction and perils. Then comes *nissaraṇa* or stepping out of the attraction towards *saḷāyatana*.

Next, I wish to discuss with you a very important *sutta* called the *Saḷāyatanika Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It can be considered as the most important discourse on the six sense spheres. Here you find the Buddha doing a comparative analysis. On one side is the ordinary worldling who understands the six sense spheres at his mental level, and the satisfaction and perils that he experiences. On the other hand a person who has a realistic vision of the *saḷāyatana*, being convinced of the temporary nature of enchantment and the inherent unpleasantness, obtains release from them. This is how the Buddha commences his comparison.

"*Cakkhuṁ bhikkhave ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ rūpe ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ cakku viññāṇaṁ ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ*" and he goes on. Let's study the meanings.

"*jānaṁ passaṁ*" means knowledge and vision. Not having knowledge and vision of the true nature of the eye as it is and external objects as they are – 'as it is' must be understood with regards to impermanence – not seeing the impermanence, not seeing the eye consciousness as it is, which is the outcome of those two, and not seeing eye contact as it is, and not seeing the resultant pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, as they really are, one develops attachment towards the eye – "*cakkhusmiṁ sārajjati*" – to the external objects, to the eye consciousness, to the eye contact and to the pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings resulting from eye contact. Now you can understand the entanglement of the worldlings with the six spheres. Did you notice that the clinging runs into the mind as well? Unable to understand the mind wisely as it really is, one gets attached to the mind, the mental phenomena that the mind focuses on, the mind consciousness, mind contacts and feelings arising thereof.

Then the resultant perils of this process are discussed "*tassa sārattassa saṁyuttassa sammūḷhassa assādānupassino viharato āyatiṁ pañcupādānakkhandhā upacayaṁ gacchanti*."

That worldling, due to his ignorance, firmly clings to, and gets bound to the above mentioned sense spheres, sense objects and the resultant consciousness, so that caught in the deception of apparent pleasure, he gets into deep trouble.

"*Āyatiṁ pañcupādānakkhandhā*" he accumulates the fivefold aggregates of grasping, again. As a result of gripping the temporary mass of phenomena that pass by, one develops the fivefold aggregates of grasping. Then its perils are explained.

"*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. So kāyadukkhampi cetodukkhampi paṭisaṁvedeti*."

These are the perils he has to experience. His physical distresses increase. His mental distresses increase. His physical pains increase. His mental pains increase. His physical burnings increase. His mental burnings increase. He experiences a mass of physical and mental grief. This explanation deals with the worldly aspect. Now look at the opposite aspect.

"*Cakkhuñca kho bhikkhave jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ rūpe jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ cakkuviññāṇaṁ jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ, cakkusamphassaṁ jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ."*

Thus continues the account. If one were to see the eye as it really is, which means to see the impermanent nature of the eye, and the physical objects as they really are, and see the resultant eye consciousness as impermanent in its very nature, and also the eye contact, and feeling as they really are, such a person – such a monk – who disciplines himself in this dispensation, seeing the perils of the sensory activity, undergoes this wonderful change.

Tassa pañcupādānakkhandā apacayaṁ gacchanti. The five aggregates of grasping diminish in him. Compare this with the worldling. Every experience is accumulated in his mind. He accumulates the relevant material objects as his own aggregate of form, and the feelings as his own heap of feelings. This is what leads him on in *Saṁsāra*. But the disciplined monk, in contrast, sees impermanence then and there. Nothing remains as residue.

Therefore,

"*apacayaṁ gacchati*" they are gradually exhausted. Here *upacaya* and *apacaya* stand for *Saṁsāra* and *Nibbāna* respectively. The Buddha attempts to illustrate how the mind inclined towards *Nibbāna* disciplines itself to wipe out the five aggregates of grasping. Then the Buddha goes on to describe the result thereof.

"*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti*. *So kāyasukhampi cetosukhampi paṭisaṁvedeti.*"

"His physical distresses diminish. His mental distresses diminish. His physical pains diminish. His mental pains diminish. His physical burnings diminish. His mental burnings diminish. He experiences immense physical and mental happiness. Then the Buddha delves deeper into this discipline. A monk who disciplines himself thus, finds himself progressing unbelievably fast on the Noble Eightfold Path. I wish to remark that this *sutta* will be of immense help to those who meditate on the *saḷāyatana*.

Then the Buddha proclaims the final result of this training.

"*Yā tathābhūtassa diṭṭhi sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi*."

"If such a disciplined monk holds a view, that will definitely be the right view."

This refers, not to the ordinary *sammādiṭṭhi* that we talk of, but is the very path, right view at its deepest level. If such a monk holds an intention, it is the right intention. If he makes an effort, it is always a right effort. If he has awareness, it is a correct awareness. If he attains any concentration, it is bound to be the right concentration. Now did you notice that only five links in the Noble Eightfold Path are discussed here.

Now the Buddha explains why three items were left out.

"*Pubbeva kho panassa kāyakammaṁ vacīkammaṁ ājīvo suparisuddho hoti."*

A monk who undertakes this strenuous discipline, at the very outset dispels all gross impure tendencies which have no place in the path to *Nibbanā*. He is beyond lowly talk and action. He is pure in word, action and livelihood – *Sammā vācā, Sammā kammanta, Sammā ājīva*. At the higher level of the path he concentrates on right view, right intention, right effort, right

awareness and right concentration – *Sammā diṭṭhi, Sammā saṁkappa, Sammā vāyāma, Sammā sati, Sammā samādhi*. Now the Buddha takes us further up the path. The monk who develops the Noble Eightfold Path in this manner attains purity of mind.

"*Tassa evaṁ imaṁ ariyṁ aṭṭhañgikaṁ maggaṁ bhāvayato cattāropi satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Cattāro sammappadhānā bhāvanā paripūriṁ gacchatnti. Cattāro iddhipādā bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Pañca pi indriyāni bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Pañca pi balāni bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Sattapi bhojjhañgā bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti*."

This is a very clear explanation of how one perfects the thirty seven Factors of Enlightenment through this disciplinary training. In the process of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, the fourfold mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna* develops spontaneously. So does the fourfold right effort, the four psychic powers, the four faculties, the five powers and the seven factors of enlightenment. This is a description of the transcendental stage or the Supramundane stage.

The Buddha speaks further of the monk who has perfected himself thus far.

"*Tassime dve dhammā yuganaddhā vattanti samatho ca vipassanā ca.*"

"In him, these two factors, namely calm and insight prevail like yoked oxen."

Two oxen yoked to a cart have to step together. Similarly, you have heard I am sure as *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditators, that one attains concentration through calm and the three signata – *tilakkhana* – through insight.

There are three methods one could follow. After practicing *samatha*, one could proceed to practice *vipassanā*.

"*Samatha pubbaṁgamaṁ vipassanaṁ*."

Or else practice *vipassanā* first and then *samatha*.

"*Vipassanā pubbaṁgamaṁ samathaṁ*."

There is yet another method.

"*Samathaṁ ca vipassanaṁ ca yuganaddhaṁ bhāveti."*

That is 'pulling together' like two oxen yoked to a cart. Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* develop "yoked together".

Now the Buddha reveals the final result of this exertion.

"*So ye dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā, te dhamme abhiññā parijānāti. Ye dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā pajahati. Ye dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā, te dhamme abhiññā bhāveti. Ye dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā sacchikaroti.*"

Whatever mental factors have to be comprehended through higher knowledge, he comprehends them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be eliminated through higher knowledge, he eliminates them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be developed through higher knowledge, he develops them through higher knowledge. Whatever

mental factors have to be realized through higher knowledge, he realizes them through higher knowledge.

The Buddha then proceeds to explain these *dhammas*. What should be comprehended are the five aggregates of grasping. What should be eliminated are ignorance and craving. What should be developed are calm and insight – *samatha* and *vipassanā*. What should be realized and perfected are the wisdom of Arahanthood and emancipation through Arahanthood which are known by the terms *vijjā vimutti*. This is a wonderful *sutta* that deals with different methods applicable in practicing the path to *Nibbāna*.

It is clear that there are several methods to attain *Nibbāna*, depending on the object of meditation. Some may realize the impermanence of the five aggregates of grasping through the meditation of the three characteristics. Some may meditate on the primary elements. Some may meditate on impermanence in life through the medium of the six sense spheres. Finally, all this converge (add up) to reach the summit. Last of all, *samatha* and *vipassanā*, like two oxen yoked to a cart, 'pull together' in the final phase. Three factors in the Noble Eightfold Path having been already eliminated, the remaining five are eliminated during this final phase. It is the transcendental Noble Eightfold Path that is referred to here. Misconduct through word, body and livelihood become inapplicable here, as they have been already wiped out. When the meditator's mind functions on a transcendental level, only the other five factors become active. The Buddha explains how one could reach the final goal of *vijjā vimutti phala*, through the analysis of the six sense spheres. When referring to impermanence, I am reminded of several more *sutta*s that may confirm this position.

Once the Buddha addresses the Monks and declares "*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvīno cakkhuviññāṇaṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*"

The eye is impermanent, subject to change and subject to 'otherwiseness'. They are the three sides of impermanence.

"It is impermanent" is an incomplete statement. Due to its impermanent character it is subject to change. Finally become 'otherwise' or different from what it was. This same description is applicable to material objects and also to visual consciousness. They are impermanent, subject to change and becomes 'otherwise'.

Now comes a question based on this discussion.

"Monks, how can a permanent thing arise from an impermanent thing? If the eye is impermanent, if material objects are impermanent, how could eye consciousness become permanent? The eye contact resulting from eye consciousness is also impermanent. The experience that arises dependent on eye contact is also impermanent. The purpose of this explicit description is to drive the point home. The entire statement "*aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī*" is repeated at every point. Everything is *calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino*. Here several terms are used to stress the character of impermanence, such as 'quivers', 'withers', 'impermanent', 'subject to change', 'has the character of otherwiseness'. Somebody wishes to see some object well. But the moment he looks, both the object and the eye undergo a swift change, although we are unaware of this change. They quiver. That's why they

are called 'movies'. Unable to understand the fast quivering nature, one establishes oneself on the perception of compact and tries to grasp material 'objects'.

"I saw this form with my own eye. It is the very same form."

It is not easy to understand the change it undergoes every moment. In this manner the Buddha makes explicit the nature of change everywhere. This is the second *Dvayaṁ Sutta* in the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which is of immense help to meditators on impermanence. It winds up as follows:

"*calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, viparināmino*"

"they quiver, wither, has the nature of impermanence and change."

It is invisible to the physical eye. It is visible only to the eye of wisdom.

As the meditator on vipassanā reaches higher and higher, he begins to see through the world as 'totally different' to what others see. The *Thera Theri Gatha* has recorded amazing objects of meditation, such as a flowing stream, a fire. He who has constantly cultivated the nature of impermanence will see impermanence in everything. The fallen leaf, the blossoming and fading flower is impermanent. That impermanence is very strong.

At times the Buddha has declared "*Anicca saññā bhikkhave bhāvitā bahulīkatā sabbaṁ kāmarāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ rūparāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ bhavarāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ avijjaṁ pariyādiyati samūhanti*."

A thorough training in the perception of impermanence results in total elimination of the attachment to sensuality. The passion for material objects, the yearning for becoming, ignorance and finally the subtle conceit of self are totally eradicated. The Buddha has spoken so much in praise of the development of the perception of impermanence, that he has once remarked "It is incorrect to say there are two paths to *Nibbāna* because they all converge at the summit."

One has to practice either the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or the perception of impermanence. This point is confirmed in the *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*. However, there is no contradiction here because both serve the same purpose. At a superficial glance, we see one disciplining oneself in Four Foundations of Mindfulness following the accepted methodology.

He follows this one and only path until he realizes *Nibbāna*. That is the accepted method. But we see that impermanence is also declared as the path.

"There are two paths to gain control over defilements. One is the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the other is the development of the perception of impermanence."

The latter serves as a strong support in developing the spiritual qualities such as the fourfold *satipaṭṭhānas*, and the four methods of right effort *sammappadhāna*. Everything that the Buddha has taught about impermanence is so amazingly relevant in the process of spiritual training. We have discussed here only a limited amount of that wealth of information.

We must understand that the Buddha uses a variety of comparisons to emphasize the importance of *saḷāyatana*. *Vedagu* refers to the Arahant. *Triveda* is not the three *Vedas* of the Brahmins but the *tevijjā* Arahants are endowed with that is the knowledge of recollecting

previous births, the knowledge of the divine eye, the knowledge of the elimination of influxes – *pubbe nivāsānussati ñāna, dibba cakkhu and āsavakkhaya ñāna*. The entirety of *tevijjā* comes under the purview of *nissaraṇa* or stepping out mentioned under six sense spheres. The earlier ascetics and Brahmins unfortunately missed this aspect of *nissaraṇa*. Neither did they understand the origin of *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It was the Buddha who proclaimed that a *vedagu* is found only in his path, and so is all spiritual perfection. The *Mahā Saḷāyatana Sutta* in particular, emphasizes the teachings of *saḷāyatana*, as we see. Although my discourse is brief, I have tried to direct all my explanations towards the practice of meditation. I hope it will be helpful to you.

The doctrine of impermanence proclaimed by the Buddha is of immeasurable importance. Everything is included within it. On the other hand, everything in the world takes place within these six sense spheres. We cannot realize it because we are running after a mirage. The day we realize this truth, all problems will dissolve.

I think it is enough for today. You should read or listen to this topic of meditation more often, internalize it and put it into practice with determination. It will help you to tread the Buddha's path to *Nibbāna* as far as possible. The Buddha has clarified the direct path to *Nibbāna* or *vijjā vimutti*. Today we tried to expand your knowledge on the *Saḷāyatana*, in this series of discourses on *Paticca Samuppāda*. We hope to discuss the other topics if time permits, later.

I wish you would reach the path of *Dhamma* without delay, with the help of this series of talks. May you acquire the strength, determination and power to fulfill the requirements in perfecting the path and attaining fruition as *sotāpanna sakadāgāmī anāgāmi* and *arahant*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they all rejoice in this insightful sermon. May it be conducive to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you attain *Nibbāna* in this very life!