

FOR THE WISE TO KINDLE THE LIGHTS OF WISDOM



DISCOVER YOURSELF

VEN. ALAWWE ANOMADASSI THERO

For the wise to kindle the lights of wisdom

Discover Yourself

Most Venerable Alawwe Anomadassi Thero

"The gift of dhamma surpasses all other gifts"

Discover Yourself

Most Venerable Alawwe Anomadassi Thero

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DEDICATION

A presentation offered with utmost respect

To my greatest teacher, Lord Buddha, the teacher of the three worlds,

To my distinguished teacher who bestowed higher ordination on me,

And revealed the path by showing me the pure Buddha words,

And to devotees who rejoice in the teaching of Lord Buddha.

Introduction

Bodhisattva Siddhartha Gotama who was born into this world 2640 years ago, completely eradicated all defilements and became Samma Sambuddha 2605 years ago. From then onwards, for forty-five years, he showed the true nature of things to wise people and devas, which helped the wise realise the dhamma and end their saṃsāric journey.

While the island of Sri Lanka received the pure dhamma due to the arrival of Arahant Mahinda, there were many people in the country who benefitted from this dhamma and attained Nibbāna. The pure dhamma, which was thus established in the island of Sri Lanka, is radiant again today after a long time.

Over a period of 50-60 years, the studying of this pure Buddha words by a few wise and selfless people, their walking of the path that opened up before them, their preaching of the dhamma to wise devotees, and the following of the path by the devotees themselves, all contributed greatly to this awakening. This dhamma analysis has been prepared using the analyses of these noble ones and my own study of the true Buddha words to help you wise readers understand the dhamma.

The dhamma is unattainable by reasoning, therefore, may this dhamma discourse be of assistance to the wise to attain Nibbāna, and may it help them open up the true path by applying paññā to the Buddha words.

May the merits gained from this gift of dhamma be bestowed upon the venerable bhikkus, bhikkunis and devoted followers of the dhamma, without whose help in various ways this book would not have been possible! May they all realise the Four Noble Truths!

Theruwān saranai!

Venerable Alawwe Anomadassi Thero

A Note from the Translator

This book is the English translation of the Sinhala book, *Thama Soyanna* (තමා සොයන්න), which was based on an oral dhamma discourse of Venerable Alawwe Anomadssi Thero. I was inspired to do this translation because I was greatly impressed by the Thero's deep knowledge of the true dhamma, his inborn ability to explain it in a way that even a beginner can understand, his openness to questions that arise after his dhamma discourses, and his availability and approachability whenever further clarification was necessary. At a time when numerous misconceptions of the Buddha dhamma are circulating around, the noble effort the Thero constantly makes to clear those misconceptions and let the pure Buddha words shine through is truly commendable. With the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem, may the Venerable Thero have the strength and energy to continue with this great dhamma dāna to shed light on the path to Nibbāna! And may the Thero enjoy the dhamma pīti that flows from this great meritorious deed for a long time to come!

According to the Venerable Thero, his Sinhala dhamma discourse was prepared using the analyses of the few wise and selfless people who uncovered the pure Buddha words in the past 50-60 years in Sri Lanka, and his own arduous study of the true dhamma for many years. His aim was not only to spread the pure Buddha words that were brought to light through such dedication and devotion, but also to help people understand them clearly. The English translation of the Thero's Sinhala dhamma discourse attempts to extend the fruits of that supreme effort to the wise devotees in Sri Lanka and overseas, who cannot read the Sinhala book due to the language barrier.

When doing the English translation, I followed the Thero very closely, translating his discourse in the Sinhala book sentence for sentence as much as possible. The Sinhala book was based on an oral dhamma discourse and so, it had a conversational style and expressions used in spoken language. As I followed the Sinhala book closely, the English translation of the book reflects some of these features. Although this led to some repetition in certain sections, it helped to keep out concepts and views extraneous to the Thero's analysis. I considered this necessary as important dhamma concepts can be contaminated by misconceptions during a translation.

To maintain the purity of the true Buddha words, key Pali terms were explained within the context of paṭicca-samuppāda in a comprehensive descriptive glossary constructed under the supervision of the Venerable Thero. The definitions of these terms, which at times are quite elaborate, will help the reader understand the terms within the context of paṭicca-samuppāda, which is central to the Thero's dhamma discourses. Therefore, even readers who are familiar with the terms may benefit from reading the glossary as it was purposely made descriptive to help deepen the readers' understanding of familiar words or clear up any misunderstandings. For this reason, it is advisable to read the glossary or keep checking back to the glossary when reading the discourse.

Some key Pali terms, however, were left untranslated as they cannot be effectively translated into English in a word or a phrase, allowing the reader to understand the meaning of such terms from the Thero's discourse itself. Pali terms that occurred less frequently were defined within the text, sometimes within brackets and sometimes in a footnote when a more descriptive definition was necessary.

I take this opportunity to thank the tireless effort made by the devotees who produced the Sinhala transcription of the Thero's oral discourse. Transcribing an oral discourse word for word is a difficult and tedious task. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort they spent on this benevolent task because the English translation of the discourse would not have been possible without the Sinhala transcription.

I also express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Sanura Gunatilake and Ari Ariyaratne for their assistance with the descriptive glossary. This task involved identifying the key Pali terms that needed to be defined in the glossary and those that were to be left untranslated, and also providing comprehensive definitions for the terms within the context of paṭicca-samuppāda. I deeply appreciate the effort they made to ensure that the readers get only the pure Buddha words through the defined terms.

I am especially indebted to Sanura Gunatilake for his unflagging enthusiasm to edit the English translation. It was his keen interest in the dhamma, his attention to detail, his tireless attempt to redo Pali terms with diacritical marks, and his patience and perseverance to make the book reader-friendly that made this book a reality. Editing a book is a difficult and time-consuming task that also requires skill and versatility. This book would never have been possible without his dedicated editorial support and his commitment to the noble task of making the true dhamma accessible to a wider audience.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank numerous other devotees, who though not mentioned here by name, helped in many ways to bring out this translation to a wider audience.

May this great dhamma dāna help everybody attain ultimate happiness, Nibbāna!!!

Sadu Sadu Sadu!!!

Geetha Premaratne
Canberra, Australia
November 2018

I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the Fully Enlightened One

‘Anamataggoyaṃ, bhikkhave, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsaṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratāṃ.’¹

‘Incalculable, brethren, is the beginning of this round of rebirth. No beginning is made known of beings wrapped in ignorance, fettered by craving, who run on, who fare on the round of rebirth.’

We are born as human beings into this world as a result of the kusala kamma (meritorious deeds) we did in a previous life. So, what we are now enjoying are the good results of the kusala kamma we did in the past. Similarly, if we accumulate kusala kamma in this life, what we will get as a result of that in the future is sukha (happiness and comfort), and if we accumulate akusala kamma (non-meritorious deeds) in this life what we will get as a result is dukkha. So, when we are wandering-on in saṃsāra (the cycle of repeated death and rebirth), we experience happiness and comfort when we are born in higher realms of existence and we experience misery and suffering when we are born in lower realms of existence.

There is an important point here that we need to remember: It is due to avijjā and taṇhā that we are trapped in this cyclic existence. In fact, it is due to avijjā and taṇhā that we have been wandering on in this beginning-less saṃsāra for eons. The same applies to the future. If we have avijjā and taṇhā in the future, we will not be able to see an end to saṃsāra. As we are caught up in this saṃsāric wandering until we eradicate avijjā and taṇhā, we need to accumulate kusala kamma that will bring happiness and comfort into our lives. If we do not do so, akusala kamma will bring misery and suffering into our lives.

Devotees, today many people wrongly think that kusala kamma perpetuates saṃsāra. However, our saṃsāric wandering is due to avijjā and taṇhā and not due to kusala kamma. During this endless wandering, we experience happiness and comfort due to the results of kusala kamma and we experience misery and suffering due to the results of akusala kamma. Although many people have misunderstood this and think that kusala kamma perpetuates saṃsāra, what perpetuates saṃsāra is avijjā and taṇhā.

If so devotees, what should we eradicate – avijjā and taṇhā or kusala kamma? Avijjā and taṇhā of course. We need to remember this well. We need to accumulate kusala kamma until we are able to eradicate avijjā and taṇhā. If we do not accumulate kusala kamma, the lower realms of existence will be our legacy.

Think a little about what I am going to say now. When we speak or act with loving kindness, pleasantness arises in our minds. So, when we do some kusala kamma we become happy in that very moment. Based on this happiness, we also accrue merit that abundantly bears fruit

¹ Tiṇakaṭṭhasutta Sutta – Grass and Sticks (SN 15:1:1)

in the future. In the same way, when we speak or act in anger, unpleasantness arises in our minds in that very moment and brings about sorrow and suffering in the future.

Devotees, this truth can be understood even without the birth of a Buddha. Anybody who has the capacity to think can understand this. That we enjoy comfort and happiness when we help someone in our day-to-day lives, when loving kindness and empathy arise in our minds is a mundane truth. This is called Laukika Samma Diṭṭhi (mundane right view).

In his saṃsāric journey, Siddhartha Bodhisattva was born many times as a perfect human being due to his great virtues. In those previous lives, he had mundane right view. As the great teacher, Sunetta, and as the great teacher, Araka, he showed the way to the higher realms of existence to many people. This shows that even without the words of a Buddha, we can enjoy happiness and comfort by doing good things and experience misery and suffering by doing bad things. It is a universal law that exists in this world.

Lord Buddha has said:

Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ
Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ²

We reap what we sow. If we do good deeds we enjoy good results. If we do bad deeds we experience bad results.

This fact can be understood by anybody who has the capacity to think. Such a person likes doing good deeds and is afraid of doing bad deeds. Bodhisattva Siddhartha was such a person. He had three palaces called Ramya, Suramya and Subha. He enjoyed many other comforts. As misery and sorrow were concealed from him, he never had a chance to experience them. However, he had the capacity to think that it was necessary to liberate himself from misery and suffering if he experienced them even a little. This is why as soon as he saw the Four Great Signs³, the wise thinking arose in him that he needs to find liberation from the misery and suffering he happened to encounter.

He began to think, 'What is the meaning of this life? We grow old, get sick and die. How does one find liberation from this?' Devotees, this is how a wise person thinks.

However, in this endless saṃsāric wandering, we went through many realms of existence such as the divine, human, animal and peta⁴ realms. It is like enacting different episodes in different lives. An actor or an actress plays ten different roles in ten different stories. He or

² Isayosamuddaka Sutta – Seers by the Ocean (SN 11:10)

³ Siddhārtha Gautama saw in succession an old man, a sick person, a corpse being carried to cremation, and a monk in meditation beneath a tree.

⁴ Beings in the lower realms, often depicted in Buddhist art as starving beings with pinhole-sized mouths through which they can never pass enough food to ease their hunger.

she gets a role that suits his or her skills and abilities. Similar to this, we too get a good role in a higher realm if we have accumulated kusala kamma and a role in a lower realm if we have accumulated akusala kamma. We thus wander on through saṃsāra playing different roles at different times.

There is no end in sight yet to this cyclic wandering. We do not see that what we have been doing is just playing different roles in different lives. Generally speaking, the life span in the human realm is about fifty to one hundred years. After that, life comes to an end and another role play begins. Now when someone plays different roles like this, in one movie he or she may play the role of a mother and in another movie, he or she may play the role of a wife. Our saṃsāric journey is similar to this, but we do not see the similarity. Why? This is because we just enjoy ourselves in our different lives and do not think beyond this. We do not think about what is beyond this life. We also do not know about the life beyond.

Look at the great wisdom of Siddhartha Bodhisattva. As soon as he saw the Four Great Signs, he began to contemplate deeply: Why are people born into this world? Why do they get sick?

Why do they grow old? Why do they die? Why do they get all this as their legacy? Is there no way out of this misery and suffering? We also get to see people who get sick, who grow old and who die, but we do not have the capacity to think like the Bodhisattva. That is why everybody in this world benefits when someone with such deep wisdom is born into this world. Our Bodhisattva was such a person.

Devotees, we need to think about our lives. Why do we keep wandering on in saṃsāra, being born in the different realms of existence like the animal, peta, hell, human and divine realms? Is there some way that we can find liberation from this? How do we find that liberation? Such questions should occur to us.

However, this saṃsāric journey has not become an issue for us. As the enjoyment of people today is what is derived from sense pleasures, today's world is one that is plagued by unsatiated pleasure, one that never finds contentment. What we find today is a great wave of sensual pleasure.

What is the world seeking through this sensuous wave? It is always a sight that is pleasurable for the eye, a sound that is pleasurable for the ear, a smell that is pleasurable for the nose, a taste that is pleasurable for the tongue, a sensation that is pleasurable for the body. We are always seeking something that is pleasurable for the five senses for our own pleasure and enjoyment.

We never get satisfied with what we find. Think about the pleasures and comforts we enjoyed in the past. We do not have them any longer. What we now have is only something that lingers in our minds. Everything that we had in the past has disappeared, but we keep thinking about them. This is what we call life.

We cannot go back to what we enjoyed in the past. They have disappeared for ever, but we derive pleasure from what lingers in our minds.

Similarly, think about what we are going to have in the future. They are not here yet, but we derive pleasure through expectation. When the future becomes the present, the present becomes the past.

So, these are all just mental conceptions. It is due to these mental conceptions that our lives go on. Our saṃsāric journey is only a mental conception of our existence in the past, our existence in the present and our existence in the future.

Fuelled by insatiable sense pleasures, we keep going on this journey because we do not see its true nature. Therefore, we cannot see an end to the journey. As long as we pursue those pleasures, we cannot realise the truth. We will never find a dhamma that stimulates our paññā.

Devotees, Lord Buddha gives a very good comparison for the pleasure we derive from the senses. A person who has a skin rash suffers much pain. He scratches the rash or burns it to relieve his suffering. What does he get from this? He gets a sense of pleasure because scratching or burning the rash reduces the pain. It is true that there is a sense of pleasure due to the vikurṭi sañña (distortion of perception). However, what is the result of that pleasure? His rash worsens.

Lord Buddha says that the enjoyment we derive from sense pleasures is the same. There is some happiness, but it is only a momentary and trifling happiness. It is a happiness that leads to suffering. If we understand this, then we can apply the dhamma practically to our lives. Most of the time, we are not skilful enough to do this. This is because we do not seek the dhamma that Lord Buddha actually preached.

Paññavato ayaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo duppaññassā⁵

Devotees, for whom is Buddha dhamma? It is for one who is endowed with paññā.

It is only those who can think who grasp this dhamma. The problem we have is avijjā and taṇhā. First we need to see them as a problem, and then we need to find a way to eradicate them. We need to seek the truth for this. Alawaka Yakka (the demon Alawaka) questions Lord Buddha thus:

What is the real flavour in this world? It is the flavour of truth.

⁵ Anuruddhamahavitakka Sutta – To Anuruddha (AN 8:30)

How does paññā arise? By examining the dhamma of the Arahants which helps one attain Nibbāna with paññā and vigilance.⁶

Therefore devotees, we too should listen to the dhamma with faith and examine it. It is only then that we would be able to properly grasp the dhamma preached by Lord Buddha. Those who cannot think cannot grasp this dhamma.

I will give you an example. When you study Mathematics at the Advanced Level, you need to learn the Mathematical methods called differentiation and integration. Let us say that someone sees a Mathematical problem related to these methods on a piece of paper. As he has not learnt the relevant theory, he does not see it as a problem that needs to be solved.

Now let us say that there is another person who has learnt all the relevant theory. As soon as he sees the Mathematical problem, he sees it as a problem that needs to be solved. For the person who learnt the theory it is actually a Mathematical problem. However, the Mathematical problem will not be solved if he just writes the theory next to the problem.

Therefore, even if he identifies it as a Mathematical problem and writes the theory next to the problem, the problem will never be solved. What does he have to do to solve the problem? He has to think about the problem based on the theory. This is called 'yoniso manasikāra'. It is only then that he will be able to solve the problem. The problem will not be solved until he does this, although he identifies it as a Mathematical problem and also knows the theory relevant to the problem.

Similarly, when a Mathematician presents a Mathematical theory, he should be able to prove it with facts. The theory needs to be sound. The relevant Mathematical problem can be solved by understanding the theory and applying the theory to the problem.

It is in that very same manner that our thinking capacity arises through Buddha dhamma. The Mathematical theory is like the dhamma. The Mathematical problem is like our saṃsāric wandering, or our constant contact with the world through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. However, there is no value in just learning the dhamma or just remembering what we have heard. What is important is realising the dhamma. It is only if we understand it correctly by applying it to ourselves that we will see the value of the theory. When we think about the problem based on the theory, the problem gets solved.

We keep wandering on in saṃsāra because due to avijjā and taṇhā we do not see the reality that underpins that journey. When we understand this truth through our lives and search for the reasons, the problem gets solved. This is what is called yoniso manasikāra. Nobody can give this ability to us. It is similar to the fact that not everybody who learns Mathematics will pass the Mathematics tests they sit. Also, it is only the person who has the ability to think

⁶ Alawaka Sutta – The Discourse on Alawaka (SN 10:12)

that will solve a Mathematics problem. Similarly, not everybody will see and realise the dhamma.

Let us think that there is a person who is learning the Sinhala language. He has to answer a question related to a novel for a Sinhala Literature examination. This particular question requires him to write what is exactly in the novel. There is nothing he has to think afresh to answer the question.

It is not a question for which he has to apply his thinking ability. All he has to do is just write out the answer like writing a school composition. He only needs to remember the necessary information.

Now in Buddha dhamma, we learn about paṭicca-samuppāda and the workings of the āyatana. We know these words, but just remembering them is like writing something from memory for an examination. So, we need to think about these aspects of the dhamma with wisdom and apply them to the problem about our lives. Most people think that the dhamma is only for those who are sick and tired of life. They also think that it is only such people who should listen to the dhamma and do meditation. However, Buddha dhamma is for those with wisdom, for those who can think with discernment. Even those who have not been successful in life can see the dhamma if they can discern it with wisdom.

Devotees, so Siddhartha Bodhisattva began to think about himself thus: 'I have been wandering on in saṃsāra in the past. I am wandering on in saṃsāra now, and will also wander on in saṃsāra in the future. When will I get to see an end to this?' We too need to think about how we are going to find liberation from this cyclic journey. For this, we need to start seeking the dhamma that Lord Buddha preached after his enlightenment. We need to seek the dhamma through our own lives. This is called seeking the truth, the Four Noble Truths.

The avijjā in our lives is the avijjā of not understanding the Four Noble Truths. It is due to this avijjā that we keep wandering on in saṃsāra. If so devotees, we need to find a way to eradicate that avijjā. Those who seek the way in this manner are motivated to find out what dukkha is, what the origin of dukkha is, what the cessation of dukkha is and what the path leading to the cessation of dukkha is.

What do they use to find the Four Noble Truths? They use the dhamma and their own thinking capacity.

Lord Buddha says that the main thing that is needed for this is samma diṭṭhi. Samma diṭṭhi arises due to saddharmashravanaya (listening to the dhamma) and yoniso manasikāra. Saddharma is the true dhamma shown by Lord Buddha. Yoniso manasikāra is one's ability to discern wisely. Those who investigate the dhamma using these two aiding factors are able to understand their own lives.

Devotees, we should therefore think about a way to understand the Four Noble Truths through our own lives. When we are able to do this, the gem of paññā arises in us. It is more precious than having in our possession the whole earth turned into a gem. Why is this so?

Devotees, however much we fill our lives with external physical things, we do not get any spiritual satisfaction from them. None of those riches are permanent and none of them can be truly enjoyed through our inner selves.

However, those who are able to get the gem of paññā, the weapon of paññā, are able to achieve true spiritual happiness and consolation. This is because they have seen the truth. Conversely, those who do not see the truth make themselves happy or sad by thinking about the past or the future.

This is the life of those who do not see the truth. This in fact is our life.

Devotees, if we see that everything that we accumulate is impermanent, we will see the truth. To see this truth we need to generate the eye that can see Buddha dhamma. For this too, we need to investigate the Four Noble Truths.

We cannot see the dhamma with our physical eye or our mind. However, it is with the mind that we can investigate and reflect upon the dhamma. This is what is called yoniso manasikāra. When we investigate the dhamma like this the eye of paññā arises in us – the eye called paññā. It is with this eye that we can see the truth.

I will give you an example. We go to a movie theatre and watch a movie. We see a nice story on the screen. When the actors fight we are nervous. When the actors laugh we too laugh. A colourful story comes up before us. We live within this story.

Let us think that the person who directed the movie sits with us watching the movie. Does he see a movie? What does he feel when there is a fight? He knows that it is just make-believe, that it is just pretence. He knows that there are no houses on fire. He does not have to think so. He just sees it.

He knows how the movie was made. So he does not see a movie. He sees only the pretence there. So when there is a scary scene he does not get frightened. When there is a funny scene he does not laugh. He sees through the pretence completely.

Devotees, both viewers saw the same movie in the same movie theatre. However, the Director's view was different. This is because he saw it with a special eye – the eye that can see how the movie was made. So he did not see a movie. He did not welcome one episode after another with glee. What is the reason for this? He was able to see the truth in what he saw. A person who does not see this truth welcomes everything he sees. He gets attached to what he sees with taṇhā.

The truth was concealed by avijjā. Deluded by avijjā and bound by taṇhā, the story comes to life before us. The life we live in this world is like watching a movie. Seeing the truth with the eye of paññā is like the movie director watching the movie. Such a person is able to eradicate avijjā. As he saw the inner workings of the movie, he did not welcome it. As he saw the truth he did not get attracted by it.

So devotees, we all see this life like people watching a movie in a movie theatre. What we need to see instead is the process of construction in our lives just like the movie director. We need wisdom for this. We need thinking with discernment for this. No ordinary person ever gets to see through this on his own. It is only a Buddha who sees this truth.

Not everybody who watches a movie in a movie theatre can see the true nature of the movie. A special ability is required to see the truth beyond the appearances of a movie. It is this special ability that is called paññā. It is only those who apply their yoniso manasikāra through Buddha dhamma who can see the dhamma.

Devotees, then it is avijjā that we need to eradicate. What is meant by the eradication of avijjā?

Dukkhe ñāṇaṃ – the arising of knowledge about dukkha

Dukkhasamudaye ñāṇaṃ – the arising of knowledge about the origin of dukkha

Dukkhanirodhe ñāṇaṃ – the arising of knowledge about the cessation of dukkha

Dukkhanirodhagāminipadāya ñāṇaṃ – the arising of knowledge about the path that leads to the cessation of dukkha

If knowledge about these Four Noble Truths arises in someone, it is called vijjā.

Therefore devotees, let us see how the saṃsāric journey ceases to be due to that vijjā. What is dukkha? Now we generally know that birth is dukkha, old age is dukkha, sickness is dukkha, death is dukkha, association with unpleasant persons is dukkha, separation from beloved ones is dukkha, not getting what one desires is dukkha – if put succinctly, this very life which is the existence of the five khandhas is dukkha. Don't we understand that all this is dukkha? We certainly do.

Lord Buddha has said that if someone understands that suffering is a truth, the origin of suffering is a truth, the cessation of suffering is a truth, the path to the cessation of suffering is a truth, that such a person has attained the state of sotāpanna. In other words, that such a person has reached the path of dhamma. If so, then we can say that we have also attained the state of sotāpanna. This is why we need to think whether the dhamma we have understood is actually the true dhamma that Lord Buddha expounded. So we need to think about this issue.

Now devotees, when Siddhartha Bodhisattva saw the Four Great Signs, he understood that birth, old age, sickness, in other words, that this saṃsāric journey itself is suffering. If he attained the state of sotāpanna at that moment, he need not have practised dushkarak kriya⁷. Would he have gone down such a wrong path? Therefore, what we have understood seems to be only a mundane view of dukkha. What Lord Buddha showed us is a view that helps us transcend this mundane view. What he showed us is a view born of this world but through which we can go beyond this world. This is why it is called supramundane. What we have understood then is a worldly truth. However, we need to understand that truth first.

Buddha dhamma refers to three types of dukkha.

1. Dukkha Dukkata
2. Viparinama Dukkata
3. Saṅkhāra Dukkata

Dukkha Dukkata is what we see as problems, difficulties and frustrations in our daily lives. Who sees it as such? Ourselves. Buddha dhamma is one based on cause and effect and not one based on the view that there is a 'self' or personality. So what we see as dukkha is dukkha dukkata. Now when we encounter problems, difficulties, and frustrations, we try to replace them with happiness and pleasure. What does this mean? Things in the world are in a state of continuous change and flux.

This is called viparinama dukkha (dukkha that results from change). However, viparinama dukkha also becomes dukkha dukkata. Then we start seeking happiness and pleasure again. Doesn't this state of happiness and pleasure undergo change? It does. When this happens, we experience dukkha dukkata again. Then we look for happiness and pleasure again.

This is how we wandered on in saṃsāra. Knowing that this is dukkha what we try to do is run away from dukkha. What Lord Buddha showed us is not how to run away from dukkha, but how to thoroughly understand dukkha and how to fully eradicate the origin of dukkha. As long as we try to eradicate dukkha we are trying to run away from dukkha. So, we need to find out what this dukkha dukkata is through Buddha dhamma.

Devotees, what we call life is the physical and mental stress, the sorrow and lamentation that we experience when we connect with this world through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. So, first of all, we need to understand that life itself is dukkha dukkata. However, the dukkha we thus see is not the dukkha that arises due to the origin of dukkha as expounded by Lord Buddha. What we see is not saṅkhāra dukkha.

⁷ Dushkarak kriya refers to extreme asceticism characterised by self-mortification

What is meant by thoroughly understanding dukkha? Now I can see this cup. I can see with my eyes that it is a cup. Similarly, we need to see dukkha thoroughly with the eye of paññā. When we investigate in this manner we begin to grasp the origin of dukkha. The origin of dukkha means how dukkha is constructed. What is the dukkha that is thus constructed? It is saṅkhāra dukkha.

Devotees, you have heard about the tilakkhaṇa – anicca, dukkha and anattā. Lord Buddha explains that dukkha is due to anicca and that which is anicca and that which is dukkha cannot be called I or mine. However, this is not how we have understood tilakkhaṇa. What we see as dukkha is just dukkha dukkhata (the dukkha that we consider as our personal difficulties and frustrations). So, we interpret dukkha in the tilakkhaṇa as caused by anatta, which we interpret as our inability to keep things the way we want. Instead of understanding tilakkhaṇa as ‘due to anicca, there is dukkha’ and ‘due to dukkha, there is anattā’, we reinterpret it as ‘due to anattā and anicca there is dukkha’. Think well about this fact that I just explained.

When we try to understand dukkha in the Four Noble Truths through dukkha dukkhata, what do we begin to see? Fabrication. How dukkha is constructed. We begin to understand how dukkha is constructed through paṭicca-samuppāda which begins with avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra (with avijjā as condition saṅkhāra arises). It is because dukkha is constructed in this manner that it becomes dukkha. What does this mean? Dukkha is what results due to the arising of phenomena dependent on a cause. Dukkha is constructed based on the effect of a cause.

What we seek all the time is attaining Nibbāna so as to make ourselves happy, attaining the state of sotāpanna so as to liberate ourselves from the satara apāya (the four lower realms of existence)⁸. We do not seek the true nature of our lives. If we seek the true nature of our lives, then we are sure to see the dhamma. What is anicca is dukkha. What is anicca and dukkha does not have anything called ‘I’. So, that which is anicca and dukkha is anattā. The fact that there is no ‘I’ is not a conception formed in the mind. It is realisation of the dhamma.

If we realise that there is nothing called ‘I’, then is it necessary for us to protect ourselves by making us attain the state of sotāpanna, or to protect ourselves by making us attain the state of arahant? If so, we seek self-protection due to our view that there is a being, a ‘self’ or personality. If we investigate the ‘I’ according to cause and effect and if we see the truth, then we are able to understand that there is no self here. From this point onwards, what do we seek every moment? The truth. We seek the truth everywhere. When we thus seek the truth we see the tilakkhaṇa – anicca, dukkha and anattā. We live within the truth. We enjoy true inner happiness.

⁸ The animal world, ghost world, demon world and hell

So, based on anicca, dukkha and anattā, we need to think, ‘What is dukkha in our lives? How is dukkha constructed? How does dukkha cease? What is the path to the cessation of dukkha?’ We need to investigate them through ourselves.

So, what we first understand is the dukkha we actually experience, such as birth, death, sickness, old age and death. Siddhartha Bodhisattva also began to seek the truth based on this dukkha. We too should begin to seek the truth based on dukkha dukkhata that we experience. Why is there sickness in this world? Why is there old age? Why is there death?

Why do we wander on in saṃsāra experiencing this dukkha? What is the reason for this? We need to investigate the truth like this according to cause and effect. How do we do this? We need to think, ‘Why are we subject to this dukkha?’ If we think that it is because we were born into this world, then we are applying personality view to paṭicca-samuppāda without investigating it on the basis of cause and effect.

On one occasion, the venerable Moliya Phagguṇa said to the Blessed One,

‘Lord, who makes contact?’

‘Not a valid question,’ the Blessed One said. ‘The valid question is, “From what as a requisite condition comes contact?”’.

The venerable Moliya Phagguṇa asked again,

‘Lord, who feels?’

‘Not a valid question,’ the Blessed One said. ‘The valid question is, “From what as a requisite condition comes feeling?”’.

The venerable Moliya Phagguṇa asked again,

"Lord, who clings?"

‘Not a valid question,’ the Blessed One said. ‘The valid question is, “From what as a requisite condition comes clinging?”’.⁹

Devotees, what is the reason for such questions? It is because based on our own established view, we do not investigate cause and effect. What we ask every moment is ‘Who is born?’ ‘Who dies?’ ‘Who gets sick?’ Since it is ‘I’ who is subject to this dukkha, the thinking that follows is, ‘I don’t like to get sick. I don’t like to grow old’ and so on. As long as we think thus in terms of our view that there is a ‘self’ or personality, we try to run away from dukkha dukkhata. Paññā does not arise in those circumstances.

⁹ Moliyaphagguṇa Sutta (SN 12:12)

We do not find that which we need to ponder on. What we find instead is something that we try to run away from.

However, a person who seeks in terms of the dhamma finds the law of cause and effect: With avijjā as condition saṅkhāra arises, with saṅkhāra as condition viññāṇa arises, with viññāṇa as condition nāma-rūpa arises, with nāma-rūpa as condition salāyatana arises and so on. He finds the basic foundation of this world. So avijjā is the basic foundation. Avijjā means not seeing the truth as it is. We need to seek this truth like the director at the movie theatre who saw the truth of how the movie was created. When we go on searching the dhamma, we understand that dukkha is constructed (in the following manner) because we did not see the foundation of truth.

I will give you an example to help you understand this. Two people are standing on opposite sides and are twisting together several strands of thread in the same direction. Do their actions lead to the formation of a rope? No. Now a third person goes and holds the strands of thread in the middle. The two people at the opposite ends are still twisting the thread in the same direction, but now their actions lead to the formation of a rope. Now a fourth person who did not see this process gets there. He only sees that a person is holding a rope in the middle.

Now is the fourth person's view the correct view? What actually happened is that a rope was formed because the strands of thread were held in the middle by someone. However, this is not what the fourth person happened to see. Why? It is because he did not understand how the rope was actually formed. Avijjā is similar to this situation. When we connect with the world through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, we see the world with avijjā. So we do not see the truth. Therefore, we try to run away from it all.

If he knew that the rope was formed because the strands of thread were held in the middle, then he would not have thought about the existence of a rope. If we look for the truth with wisdom, we will see the truth when we live our lives through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, just like the movie director saw the truth when watching the movie.

Devotees, we cannot do this by forming mental conceptions. Today people try to look for the truth through mental conceptions. The truth can be sought only through investigation, only by questioning with wisdom - like how I explained how a mathematical problem is solved. The thinking process that is needed to solve the mathematical problem cannot be found in any book. What is there is only the theory that helps with the thinking. The thinking process has to come from those who try to solve the problem. Similarly, what Lord Buddha taught us is only the theory of dhamma. We have to apply the theory to the problem and do the thinking. It is only when we do this that we will be able to understand the dhamma through ourselves.

Now we understand the kind of dukkha we experience in our lives. We understand that it is just dukkha dukkhata. Now we need to investigate further based on this dukkha dukkhata. We need to ask why this dukkha has arisen. Then we will gradually understand how this dukkha originated. When we understand that dukkha is due to such and such causes, there is no need for us to remove it by force. Dukkha disappears without a trace. Dukkha ceases to exist. This is because we realise that it is a saṅkhāra, because we realise that it is a construction, because we realise that it has no basis of truth.

I will give you an example. Now I am tapping on this table with my hand. A sound arises due to my tapping. The sound was not in my hand. Nor was it in the table. It was the effect of a cause. Can we take an effect that arises due to a cause as something that exists? Or is it something that does not exist? We may say that it is there, or we may say that it is not there. The sound is just something that has arisen. It does not belong to the cause, but it is not correct to say that there is no sound either. It is just an effect that has arisen from a cause. Now you hear my voice continuously. You think that this sound arose due to the ear and the sound coming into contact with each other. And you think that anicca is the sound coming to a stop. What is called disappearance or destruction is ucceda diṭṭhi (nihilism).¹⁰

Lord Buddha says in Kaccānagotta sutta¹¹ that if someone sees how paṭicca-samuppāda arises, he will not hold the view that the world does not exist. If he sees how paṭicca-samuppāda ceases to arise, he will not hold the view that the world exists. Such a person is known as someone with samma diṭṭhi. You cannot say that the world is there or you cannot say that it is not there. Both are two extreme views.

We analyse what we assume as existing out there and form a mental conception that it does not exist. This is not samma diṭṭhi. It is only a wrong view. If we think that there is nothing out there then we have not seen its samudaya (origin). We have not seen how it arose. If we saw how it arose we would not say that it does not exist. This means we did not investigate how dukkha is constructed. What we understand as dukkha is in actuality only dukkha dukkhata, and therefore we analyse the dukkha dukkhata concept and come to the conclusion that dukkha does not exist¹². This nihilistic view of existence does not lead to the realisation of the dhamma.

I will give you an example to understand this. Let us take a building for the ease of understanding. Now say there is a building and in our minds we take down its roofing sheets. We also take down its bricks and concrete. Then we form a mental conception that there is

¹⁰ Nihilism - the belief that nothing in the world has a real existence.

¹¹ To Kaccānagotta (SN:12:15)

¹² We analyse the wrong concept of dukkha, which is only taken to be dukkha dukkhata. The world didn't need a Buddha to teach this because people already understood this. The specific meaning of dukkha as being saṅkhāra dukkha is actually the meaning that Lord Buddha uniquely taught.

no building there. Or we say that the building was made from these materials. Then if I ask what the roofing sheets are you would say that that is what was used to cover its roof. If I ask what the bricks are you would say that is what was used to make its walls.

What we are doing here is breaking down the building into small pieces and saying that they were part of the building. This means that although we have formed the mental conception that 'there is no building there' we have not eliminated our internal sense of the building. So the concept of the building is still there.

This is how we try to run away from dukkha. When we experience dukkha we try to analyse it in some way. We think along the lines of, 'There is no being here. There's no person here. There are only the elements here. There are only the citta (mind) and the cetasikas (mental factors) here. There are only the suddhatthakas (octad material groups) here'¹³. However, dukkha is still there as a mental conception just like when we analysed the building.

What we had when we analysed the building was also a mental conception and not a realisation. We just formed a thought, a mental conception that there was no building out there. However much we analysed it by breaking it down to small parts and minute bits, the concept of the building was still there. This is similar to assuming that there is dukkha, and analysing it without finding out how dukkha is constructed. So we are left with just a mental conception. What we have done is just trying to remove the mental conception of the building from our mind.

Lord Buddha did not teach us to see the dhamma through a mental conception. He did not teach us to analyse the dhamma with our thoughts and arrive at a mental conception. Lord Buddha taught us how to investigate the dukkha we experience. When we investigate dukkha with wisdom we begin to see how dukkha is constructed. We see the origin of dukkha when we begin to think based on the law of cause and effect – when we begin to think that with avijjā (the basis of not seeing the truth) as a condition saṅkhāra arises, with saṅkhāra as a condition viññāṇa arises, with viññāṇa as a condition nāma-rūpa arises, with nāma-rūpa as a condition salāyatana arise, in other words, that it is due to the process of paṭicca-samuppāda that dukkha arises. What then is the basis of the origin of dukkha? It is avijjā. What is avijjā?

It is the non-understanding of:

Dukkhe ñāṇaṃ – *Knowledge of dukkha*

Dukkhasamudaye ñāṇaṃ – *Knowledge of the origin of dukkha*

Dukkhanirodhe ñāṇaṃ – *Knowledge of the cessation of dukkha*

¹³ Suddhatthakas is said to contain the four great elements and additionally; colour, smell, taste and nutrition which require the four great elements to exist.

Dukkhanirodhagāminipadāya ñāṇaṃ— *Knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha*

Thus, it is also the non-understanding of the law of cause and effect.

This is why a person who has listened to Buddha dhamma, looks for the cause of this dukkha by thinking along the lines of the law of cause and effect, instead of thinking 'I own this dukkha'. When he begins to seek thus, he investigates that with birth as condition old age and death arise, with bhava as condition birth arises and so on. What is he investigating in this manner? The law of cause and effect.

One sees dukkha as the effect of a cause. Then the understanding of dukkha arises in them – the dukkha that has been constructed. This construction is the construction of the law of cause and effect. When he sees this construction, he has seen the origin of dukkha. If one sees with clear insight that dukkha is a construction dependently originated with avijjā as the ultimate cause, with this realisation, avijjā is eradicated. Then one also realises the truth of the cessation of suffering (dukkha nirodha) and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

One understands that dukkha is a truth, that the origin of dukkha is a truth, that the cessation of dukkha is a truth and that the path that leads to the cessation of dukkha is a truth by understanding how dukkha is constructed. One comes to this realisation without having rejected anything. This is why Lord Buddha advised that if we say that there is a person out there, it is a wrong view. If we say that there is no person out there, that is also a wrong view. What we are trying to do is move from the conception, 'There is' to the conception 'There is not'. We fall into these extremes because for us, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind have become physical things – things that exist.

Devotees, on one occasion, a bhikkhu called Nandaka exhorted that when an oil lamp is burning, there is light because of the wick, the flame and the oil. Light is not the wick, the flame nor the oil, but light does not exist without them either. There is light only due to a cause.¹⁴ So, does light have a tangible essence, a permanent basis? No, it does not.

Now we may think that the cause for the light exists, but the cause is also not permanent. The effect exists only due to the cause. The cause itself does not have a permanent existence. So, for us to understand impermanence, it is not necessary for the effect to disappear. Impermanence is an effect that is dependent on a cause. That understanding is called realisation.

¹⁴ Nandakovāda Sutta - Nandaka's Exhortation (MN 146)

Therefore devotees, we need to investigate the dhamma systematically and exactly as Lord Buddha preached it. It is only then that we will be able to see the dhamma through our own lives. So, we need to investigate the Four Noble Truths thus:

‘This is dukkha. Why does dukkha arise? It is due to kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā and vibhava taṇhā’.

This is called the origin of dukkha – the law of paṭicca-samuppāda with its links such as avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra (with avijjā as a condition, saṅkhāra arises), saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam (with saṅkhāra as a condition, viññāṇa arises). It is when this foundation of avijjā is eradicated, that dukkha gets eradicated. In our world, the foundation of avijjā is everywhere – it is there when we see with our eyes, when we hear with our ears, when we smell with our noses, when we taste with our tongues, when we feel with our bodies and when we think with our minds. Therefore, these causes are set not to help us liberate ourselves from saṃsāra but to make us keep wandering on in saṃsāra. So, to find liberation from saṃsāra, we need to practise a path that helps us untangle the foundation of avijjā. If not, we will never be able to find liberation from saṃsāra.

Therefore devotees, just as Lord Buddha admonished Alawaka Yakka, we need to investigate the dhamma we have heard with wisdom and diligence. However, trying to achieve something and giving oneself credit for what one achieves is not helpful here. Many people who see the perils of saṃsāra like to achieve something and give themselves credit for what they achieve. Therefore, they like to achieve the state of sotāpanna somehow. Or they like to become a saddhānusārī (a faith devotee) or a dhammānusārī (a dhamma devotee) somehow. Or they like to achieve the state of arahant. Why? In order to find some refuge for themselves. However, what we need to do is investigate and find out the truth about this life without fostering the idea of self-protection.

If we seek the truth as soon as we open our eyes, if we seek the truth through our ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, we realise through this truth the tilakkhaṇa – anicca, dukkha and anattā. The moment we see something with our eyes, if we are able to see that it is constructed by the foundation of avijjā, will there be room for taṇhā? No, there won’t be any room for taṇhā. If we are able to do this with all six of our sense bases, taṇhā will not arise. That is why taṇhā is eradicated when avijjā is eradicated. That is why we cannot eradicate taṇhā by force.

Lord Buddha has explained that there are three types of taṇhā – kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā and vibhava taṇhā. Kāma taṇhā of course can be removed by force because kāma is a conceptual desire.

‘*Saṅkappa-rāgo purisassa kāmo*¹⁵’ – *Kama is nothing but raga, which has arisen internally due to thoughts.* (Rāga is a mental conception. What is known as kāma is nothing but this mental conception of rāga).¹⁶

If kāma is only a mental conception of rāga that is within us, then who constructs this rāga? No one but ourselves. Therefore, we can also remove it ourselves. However, we cannot eradicate bhava taṇhā and vibhava taṇhā in this manner.

By removing kāma taṇhā, we can experience the higher realms of the brahmas while still being in the state of putajjanas (ordinary worldlings). However, we have not eradicated the foundation that gives rise to kāma. So, although we can remove kāma temporarily in that situation, it is like forcefully keeping a rubber ball submerged in water.

However, in order to eradicate bhava taṇhā and vibhava taṇhā, i.e. the craving for existence and non-existence, we have to see the foundation of truth. Then there is no room for existence, so we can fully eradicate taṇhā. Until then, taṇhā will remain intact. Therefore, devotees, before we try to eradicate taṇhā, we need to seek the truth in our lives. When we seek the truth in this manner, there is no possibility for taṇhā to arise.

So devotees, when we connect with this world through our eye, ear, tongue, nose, body and mind, we should think about that connection based on this law of dhamma. However much we understand the law of cause and effect, we see it as something physical. I will give you an example to help you understand this.

Now think that we are watching TV while eating something. We give a lot of attention to the TV. Isn't there a time when we do not experience taste at all? There is of course. If the taste is in the food, why don't we experience it in those moments? At such times, let alone feeling taste we don't even know what we are eating. We are of course attentive to the TV. There is something we need to think about here.

This is what is known as the law of cause and effect. What we see in this world are only physical things.

However, we do not experience this world just because of its physical nature. In order for us to experience this world, the eye, rūpā (visual form) and cakku viññāṇa (eye consciousness) need to come together; the ear, sadda (sound) and sota viññāṇa (ear consciousness) need to

¹⁵ Nibbedhika Sutta - A Penetrative Analysis (AN 6:63)

¹⁶ Kama is one's attachment to external objects. Raga is attachment that arises internally due to one's own lustful thoughts about external objects. This means that there is no kama in the external objects that we see, hear, taste, feel, smell or think about. Kama towards these objects arises when one takes an external object as pleasant and generates lustful thoughts about it. This is due to ayonisomanisikara (ie. not reflecting on how the object originated or came to be).

come together; the nose, gandha (smell) and ghāna viññāṇa (nose consciousness) need to come together; the tongue, rasa (taste) and jivhā viññāṇa (tongue consciousness) need to come together; the body, phoṭṭhabbe (touch) and kāyā viññāṇa (body consciousness) need to come together; and the mind, aramuna (mind object) and mano viññāṇa (mind consciousness) need to come together.

If so, when we were fully engrossed in watching TV whilst eating, the tongue, the taste and the tongue consciousness did not come together. It is only when these three come together that taste is perceived. It is only when the ear, the sound and the ear consciousness come together that sound is perceived. This is how we experience the world, but when contact with the world is made through the sense bases, we apply our likes and dislikes to it. If a liking arises for what is experienced, we take it as a personal liking. Why do we make this assumption? It is because we do not see the truth. We assume that there is an 'I', that there is form, sound, taste, smell, touch and thought. Now as we want to keep these going, we establish them using all the nimiti that have come through from the past. We establish them as, 'This is a glass', 'This is a video/tape recorder', and 'This is a clock'. Then we live our lives along what we have thus established.

I will give you another example to help you understand this. Now say that I see my mother. My father also sees my mother. My mother's parents also see her. When I see my mother, I see her as 'my mother'. When my father sees my mother, he sees her as 'my wife'. When my mother's parents see my mother, they see her as 'my daughter'. They recognise her through specific frames that are relevant to them. If what is called 'mother' exists in the form that is seen, that form should be 'mother' for everybody who sees it.

When seeing the form with the eye, who takes it as 'mother'? I do so. If so, then within whom is 'mother' constructed? It is within me. Therefore, the very moment the eye sees the form, what I take as 'mother' is just a mental conception of mine. What my father takes as 'wife' is a mental conception of my father. It arises as soon as the form is seen. When I see this particular female form, I do not have to think, 'This is my mother'. Avijjā is so strong that the conception arises as soon as I see the form. We apply all our nimiti to the form during the very act of seeing. The moment we see the form, we make the assumption that 'I am there' and 'The form is there', and we take the form as 'my mother' by applying our nimiti to what we see. My father applies his nimiti and takes the form as 'my wife'. By applying nimiti due to avijjā, we direct our lives towards the saṃsāric existence.

Devotees, if we need to surpass this construction, we need to have a sharp wisdom that is able to see through it all. We need to know how it is constructed like the movie director watching the movie he directed knows how exactly it was made. We need to investigate the process of paṭicca-samuppāda known as avijjā leads to saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra leads to viññāṇa, viññāṇa leads to nāma-rūpa, nāma-rūpa leads to salāyatana, salāyatana leads to phassa, phassa leads to vedanā, vedanā leads to taṇhā, taṇhā leads to upādāna, upādāna leads to

bhava, bhava leads to jati (birth), jati leads to jara (old age), marana (death), soka (sorrow), parideva (lamentation), dukkha (pain)¹⁷, domanassa (grief), upayasa (despair).

Now, Lord Buddha preached the above twelve links of paṭicca-samuppāda. We accept them with faith. However, we have not understood the theory behind them. When a mathematician expounds a mathematical theory, we have to first understand it. Similarly, we need to understand the aspects of paṭicca-samuppāda by reflecting upon them and applying them to our lives.

It is only then that we understand the theory of paṭicca-samuppāda. Otherwise, as we discussed before, it is like re-writing part of a novel as the answer to a question on a test paper. Similarly, just learning the aspects of paṭicca-samuppāda is like writing them down somewhere. So, if we do not investigate paṭicca-samuppāda with wisdom, it will be just like a story that we heard somewhere.

Devotees, the aspects of paṭicca-samuppāda such as avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra (with avijjā as a condition, saṅkhāra arises), saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa (with saṅkhāra as a condition, viññāṇa arises) are not things that exist externally. They are about us, about our saṃsāric journey. If we understand that they are about our lives, then won't we try to understand them better? Won't they become a main issue in our lives? Of course, they will. Then we can think about this dhamma every moment of our lives except when we sleep. What I am pointing out here is what we can do practically in our lives.

However, we say very often that we do not have the time for this practice. I will give you an example from a story about Andare (a well-known folklore character in Sri Lanka). One day, when Andare went to see the king, the king invited him for a meal. Andare refused the king's invitation. When the king asked him why, he said that he cannot eat anything because he had already had a very good meal. Then the king offered him some curd and Andare accepted it saying that if it is curd (a traditional Sri Lankan dessert similar to yoghurt) he could eat some. The king asked Andare how he could eat curd when he had just said that he couldn't eat anything.

To show the king what he meant, Andare asked him to fill a room with people until there was no space in it even for a finger. Then the king walked into the room. Even though the room was jam-packed, people moved to make room for the king. Why did they do this? It is because the king was the main person, the most important person there.

So, like in this story, when the dhamma takes the main place in our lives, won't we find the time for it in spite of other things in our lives? Of course, we will. Why? It is because dhamma has become the most important thing in our lives. Whatever else is there, there will be time for the dhamma. This is because through the dhamma we investigate our inner selves, we

¹⁷ In this context, taking dukkha in the worldly sense – physical and mental pain.

investigate our own lives. In fact, we need to seek the truth like someone whose head is on fire is trying to put out that fire. Why? It is because if we seek the truth with such commitment, we will not be born in a lower realm even though we may die while trying to put out that fire.

Devotees, our very lives, our inner selves are constantly burning in an eleven-fold fire of rāga, dosa, moha, jati, jara, marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, domanassa and upayasa. When we see with our eyes, we burn in this eleven-fold fire. When we hear with our ears, smell with our noses, taste with our tongues, feel with our bodies, think with our minds, we burn in this eleven-fold fire. What happens because of this fire? We keep wandering on in saṃsāra. Therefore, we need to put out these internal fires with even a greater effort than the effort made by a person whose head is on fire. So, we need to see our lives as on fire.

Lord Buddha said in the Aditta Pariyaya sutta¹⁸,

Sabbaṃ bhikkhave ādittaṃ, kiñca bhikkhave sabbaṃ ādittaṃ, cakkhuṃ bhikkhave ādittaṃ, rūpā ādittā, cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ ādittaṃ. Cakkhusamphasso āditto

Everything is on fire. What is on fire? Everything. The eye is on fire; the form is on fire; the eye consciousness is on fire.

Kena ādittaṃ: ādittaṃ rāgagginā dosagginā mohagginā, ādittaṃ jātiyā jarāmarañena, sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upāyāsehi ādittantī vadāmi.

Burning with what? Rāga, dosa, moha, jati, jara, marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, domanassa and upayasa.

If someone sees these as a burning fire, then he will make an effort to put out that fire. If our heads are on fire, won't we try to put it out? Would we go for work without trying to put it out? Or would we go and do something else when the fire is burning? When our heads are on fire, we would do nothing else but try our best to put that fire out. However, the problem is that we do not see them as a burning fire. We do not see them as a fire that is burning within ourselves. We do not see the fire burning through our eyes, ears noses, tongues, bodies and minds. If we don't see the fire, we can't put it out, can we? If so, what we need to do is try to see how the fire is burning. How do we see how the fire is burning?

If we understand the theory of paṭicca-samuppāda that was explained before, then all this will become a burning fire for us. Seeing it as a fire does not mean getting disgusted with life. It is the person who sees the Buddha dhamma who lives the most beautiful life, who lives the happiest life of all. It is only such a person who can live without attachment or conflict, without getting disgusted with life. What is the reason for this? It is because a beautiful

¹⁸ (The House) On Fire (SN 1:41)

equanimity pervades his life. He does not get burned out by life. He does not get attached to life. He lives with equanimity, without attachment or aversion for life.

Why does rāga and dosa arise in us? It is because we do not see the truth. If we see the truth we would not experience rāga and dosa. For example, if we see the truth and if we see it all the time, then we will experience neither attachment nor aversion for anything that is constructed.

Now, let us take the example of watching TV while eating that I used before. When we watch TV while eating, we do not experience the taste of the food. How does taste arise? When tongue, taste and tongue consciousness come together. When this happens, our attention goes at once from the TV to the act of eating. Then we begin to experience taste. Although we performed the act of eating before, we did not experience taste. If we understand how we experience taste, then we understand the law of cause and effect. When we understand the law of cause and effect, we see that this is dukkha, this is the origin of dukkha, this is the cessation of dukkha, and this is the path to the cessation of dukkha.

Today, what we are trying to do is eradicate dukkha. Cessation of dukkha is not something that we can achieve by force. Cessation of dukkha comes as a realisation, but we try to achieve it by force. This is because we do not fully comprehend dukkha.

Aggi Vachchagotta once asked Lord Buddha what happens to an Arahant after death. Even we think that an Arahant does not exist after death.¹⁹

Blessed One, does your fully awakened person exist after death?

Not a valid question.

So he doesn't exist?

Not a valid question.

Then he both exists and doesn't exist?

Not a valid question.

He neither exists nor does not exist.

Not a valid question.

¹⁹ Aggivaccagotta Sutta - To Vacchagotta On Fire (MN 72)

Then Aggi Vachchagotta accused Lord Buddha, *'I had a little bit of faith in you, but now even that modicum of faith is no longer there. Your dhamma is misleading. I lost the faith I had in you.'*

Now, see how he sees the dhamma. He is displeased by the dhamma.

He gets an answer to his question but is displeased.

Lord Buddha said, *'Now I will ask you a question. There is a fire burning in front of you. Do you see the fire burning?'*

Yes, I can see it.

Why is it burning?

Due to the firewood. The firewood is the primary cause. The fire is burning because of the firewood.

The fire that is burning in front of you is going out. Do you see that?

Yes, I do.

Why is that? Because the firewood has all burned down.

This fire that just went out in front of you, in which direction did it go? Did it go North or South?

Lord, it is not a valid question.

The answer Lord Buddha gave to the question about whether an Arahant exists after death was, 'It is not valid.' The answer that Vachchagotta gave to Lord Buddha's question is also, 'It is not valid.' Where is the fire that went out? It went out, but where it went is not a valid question. It just went out. The fire was burning before due to causes. It went out when those causes were not present.

Similarly, we keep wandering on in saṃsāra, burning due to causes.

Due to avijjā and taṇhā, we keep wandering on in saṃsāra, burning in the fires of rāga, dosa, moha, jati, jara, marana etc. When avijjā and taṇhā are not present, the fires go out. What can we talk about a fire that has gone out? This is what is meant by dukkha nirodha. Dukkha nirodha is not the disappearance of dukkha that is already there. It means the non-arising of dukkha due to the eradication of its causes. The path to this cessation is the Noble Eight-Fold Path.

What we are trying to do instead is eradicate dukkha. When will we truly understand the state of the Arahants, the state of the cessation of dukkha and the state of Nibbāna? It is only when we fully comprehend dukkha. When we fully comprehend dukkha, we will understand the origin of dukkha. We will understand the construction of saṅkhāra (that which has been put together). We will understand the construction of dukkha. When we understand that dukkha is caused by avijjā, we will understand that dukkha nirodha arises when the foundation of avijjā is not present. We will also understand that the path to dukkha nirodha is the Noble Eight-Fold Path. In fact, we will understand all four Noble Truths. It is only then that Sacca Ñāṇaṃ known as the ‘knowledge of the Four Noble Truths’ will arise in us. Whoever possesses this knowledge is known as a Sotāpanna.

Lord Buddha preached in Mūla Pariyāya Sutta²⁰ that the way ordinary worldlings think about Nibbāna is merely a personal view, a wrong view. Then all their thoughts about Nibbāna are wrong views. Why is this so? This is because all that they are trying to do is run away from dukkha, run away from something that exists, instead of trying to stop the construction of dukkha. Nibbāna is the non-construction of dukkha. It is only when one sees how dukkha is constructed that one understands the non-construction of dukkha. We try to eradicate dukkha without first trying to see how dukkha is constructed. What we are trying to do is eradicate dukkha through a mental conception. As I explained before, by breaking down a building and observing its minute parts does not help us get rid of the mental conception of ‘house’. Although the house does not exist physically, the mental conception of ‘house’ or ‘building’ remains intact. Similarly, what we are doing is breaking down and observing our body, mind and thoughts that we have taken as physical entities.

Although we break down everything, the breaking down is done by me. This approach does not help us develop paññā. This is because while the thinking we have here is that ‘I see things’, we apply to it the mental conception that ‘there is no being here, there is no person here, and there is no soul here’. However, they are all nothing but mental conceptions.

It is through paññā that we need to see that there is no being here or that there is no person here. What Lord Buddha showed us is the way to generate that paññā. However minute the parts we break things down to and for however long we keep breaking things down, what we are doing is just breaking down what is there. What happens here is moving from sassatha²¹ diṭṭhi (eternalism) to ucceda²² diṭṭhi (nihilism). We move from the view that ‘there is’ to the view that ‘there isn’t’. We grasp the view that ‘there isn’t’ because we fail to see the origin of dukkha. When we do not see the origin of dukkha, we also miss the cessation of dukkha.

²⁰ The Root of All Things/The Root Sequence (MN 1)

²¹ Eternalism – belief in the existence of a persisting ego-entity, soul or personality, existing independently of those physical and mental processes that constitute life and continuing even after death.

²² Nihilism – belief in the existence of an ego-entity or personality as being more or less identical with those physical and mental processes, and which therefore, at the dissolution at death will come to be annihilated.

We have been wandering on in saṃsāra with the mental conceptions of ‘there is’ and ‘there isn’t’. In our saṃsāric wanderings, we may have experienced boundless wealth and comforts. We may have been born as chakravarti rulers (those who rule ethically and benevolently over the entire world), or as the Great Brahma. We may have also experienced great suffering in the lower realms of niraya (hell) and animal realm. All that is over now. However, we did not do the one thing that needed to be done – seeking the truth of this life. We may have been ordained, we may have achieved supernatural powers like flying through the air. We may have done all this and more, but we did not do the one thing that was most important. We did not seek the truth.

Lord Buddha advises us to see this truth. Splitting a horse hair into seven and shooting one of those strands with a similar strand of horse hair is a very difficult task. What sharp wisdom is required for this task! Now even if we hang a horse hair without splitting it, we cannot shoot it, can we? How difficult it must be to shoot it with a similar horse hair!

We need such sharp wisdom to understand the dhamma. We need such yoniso manasikāra in relation to the dhamma. Understanding the dhamma is not analysing it with our minds along our mental conceptions. We can understand the dhamma only if we have exceptional inner capacity and sharp wisdom. We need to acquire this yoniso manasikāra through the dhamma. Now think for a moment about the great wise people who lived during the time of Lord Buddha. They realised the dhamma through a single short line or word of dhamma. Venerable Sariputta, when he was still Upatissa Paribrajaka (mendicant; homeless one) asked Assaji thero, ‘What is the vision of your teacher?’

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetuṃ tathāgato āha²³

Whatever arises due to causes, those causes are explained by that Great Teacher (Tathāgata).

Upatissa Paribrajaka attained the level of sotāpanna by hearing that one line of dhamma. He understood dukkha sacca (truth of dukkha), samudaya sacca (truth of the cause of dukkha), nirodha sacca (truth of the cessation of dukkha), magga sacca (truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha) and also paṭicca-samuppāda. However, did he study paṭicca-samuppāda and pañcupādānakkhandhā? No. That single line of dhamma was enough to trigger yoniso manasikāra.

Today we do not do yoniso manasikāra. We just learn the dhamma that helps to develop that yoniso manasikāra.

Bāhiya Darucheeriya thero asked for a short piece of dhamma to develop his yoniso manasikāra.

²³ Upatissa’s Question - Mahavagga I.23.5

Ditṭhe ditṭhamattam bhavissati²⁴

In the seen will be merely what is seen

Lord Buddha admonished him, ‘*So, train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen*’.

What took place here first was not the training. To train oneself it is necessary to first understand what is said. So, Bāhiya first investigated what he heard.

During this investigation, the eye of paññā arose in him. He then trained himself along the lines of, ‘In reference to the seen there will be only the seen’. He attained Nibbāna. Lord Buddha did not preach him about paṭicca-samuppāda or pañcupādānakkhandhā, but Bāhiya saw all that in that very moment. So, it is to clarify the basic theory that Lord Buddha preaches all these aspects of dhamma. He gives them to help us develop our yoniso manasikāra. So, just analysing these aspects and seeing them as mental conceptions will not help us develop our yoniso manasikāra.

Today modern science is at a very advanced stage. Due to this development of science, we analyse the physical world around us. So, we analyse atoms and think that there is nothing out there. For example, we think that there is no table, that there are only some atoms there.

Similarly, in relation to the dhamma, we analyse things and form a mental conception that there is nothing there. However, the mental conceptions that we form are all there. This is the system that we follow. We do not apply our yoniso manasikāra. We just apply our knowledge, taking it to be the absolute truth.

So, we need to apply our yoniso manasikāra. It is only when we do this that paññā awakens within us. It is with that paññā that we will see the dhamma. Until this happens, there is no way that we will see the dhamma. It is only then that we will see the real essence of all the dhamma that Lord Buddha has shown us. So, we need to understand this dhamma practically in our lives. It is only when we apply the dhamma to our lives practically that we will be able to live with lasting consolation.

However, this is not something that we will find through analysis or mental conceptions, because the truth is something that we need to realise. I need to explain an important dhamma point here – that with avijjā as condition saṅkhāra arises. This is something that we need to think about.

Avijjā is not seeing the truth in our lives. Due to avijjā we do not see the truth in this life. An example is the comparison of the rope I mentioned before. The person who did not see how

²⁴Bāhiya Sutta - The Discourse about Bāhiya (Udana 1:10)

the rope was constructed tended to think that there was a rope the moment the rope was seen. This is because that person did not see how the rope was constructed. Similarly, when we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, taste with our tongues, smell with our noses, feel with our bodies and think with our minds, in other words, when we make contact with the world, we have a deep-seated sense of 'there is'.

We have a sense that there is a body, mind and words for the purpose of existence. This is called saṅkhāra. Due to this sense of 'there is', duality becomes a necessity for existence. So, everything in this world exists with duality.

For the existence of our world, there needs to be:

a division called the eye and the form;

a division called the ear and the sound;

a division called the nose and the smell;

a division called the tongue and the taste;

a division called the body and the touch; and

a division called the mind and the thought.

The viññāṇa has been divided into two by a magical illusion, and we keep this division going through constant contact. Lord Buddha compares viññāṇa to a magic show performed at a crossroads.

Now when a magician does a magic show on a stage, he is covered from the audience from three sides. He can easily deceive the viewers because they can see him only from one side. However, the magic performed by a magician at a crossroads can be seen on all four sides. It can be carefully observed by the onlookers. So, the magician has to be very discrete with his performance.

The magical illusion of viññāṇa is created even more discretely than this. How is this done? It is by making a division as the eye and the form, the ear and the sound, the nose and the smell, the tongue and the taste, the body and the touch, and the mind and the thought. This division is made with viññāṇa as condition. Due to this division, phassa occurs.

Of everything that we experience – visual forms seen by our eyes, sounds heard by our ears, smells felt by our noses – the subtlest are thoughts conceived by our minds. Why do thoughts arise in our minds? It is because of the division made by viññāṇa called the mind and the thought.

Then are these thoughts true or false? The basis of these thoughts is false. If we try to seek the truth of what arises from this false basis without applying our yoniso manasikāra, we will never be able to break this duality. The thoughts that arise due to this false basis are only a mental conception. Although we try to see the truth of those thoughts, we will never see it because the thoughts are nothing but a mental conception.

It is when we think along these lines that paññā arises with the ability to penetrate the duality. It is this paññā that sees through the duality and generates the four-fold wisdom of dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, and magga.

For this, we need to have a tremendous capacity for yoniso manasikāra. If we have this capacity, we will not go into analysis in the form of mental conceptions. We will not try to seek the truth in the form of mental conceptions. What are we really seeking? The inner truth. We are merely seeking this truth.

When we seek the truth in this manner paññā arises. Sila is maintained. The path of a person, who has developed paññā, develops further. Sila, samadhi and paññā all arise in a person who has seen the truth, and one begins to proceed further on the path. All indriya dhammas (mental faculties) and all bojjhaṅga dhammas (factors of enlightenment) arise in such a person.

When we make a conscious effort to generate the indriya dhamma, the bojjhaṅga dhamma or the sotāpatti anga (factors of stream entry), all this effort is to generate these aspects for myself and to generate them through a mental conception. However, these things arise correctly in us only after the arising of penetrative paññā. It is not something that we can seek and achieve for ourselves. What we are doing here is making the dhamma 'a thing' in this world and trying to reach the dhamma in order to run away from this world.

Why do we take this world as existing? It is due to the foundation of avijjā. We take the eye and form, the ear and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the body and touch and the mind and thoughts as existing due to the foundation of avijjā. Then we think that what we take as existing is not correct, and take something called the dhamma. We also grasp something called Nibbāna and try to find it in order to run away from this world. We do not see that we have taken them both as things.

If we use paññā generated by investigating Lord Buddha's dhamma as a basis, and see how we took this world as a thing, this is where Nibbāna is. This is where we see the truth. This is where the bojjhaṅga dhamma develop. This is where the Iddhipāda develop (base of spiritual power). This is where the indriya dhamma develop, and this is where the Noble Eight-Fold path develops.

To see how the world is constructed, we need to apply our thinking ability based on wisdom. So, we need to learn this dhamma systematically. What is in this dhamma is truly something

that gives consolation to our inner selves. Everything in this world is a construction. There is nothing that we can grasp or keep.

We do everything with the intention of grasping and keeping. However, when we realise that it is nothing but this construction that we see everywhere around us, then even grasping the paññā that sees this reality becomes unnecessary. If everything is a mere construction, how can we keep anything? We try to keep things because we do not see that they are constructed.

Lord Buddha explains that when the tilakkhaṇa (anicca, dukkha and anattā) develop in someone, the three types of samadhi also arise, known as animitta (signless) samadhi, suññata (emptiness) samadhi and appanīhita (desireless) samadhi.

Anicca is not the destruction of physical things. Physical things end in destruction any way. Anicca is an effect that is dependent on a cause. So, when investigating anicca, one sees the process of cause and effect. When this process of cause and effect is seen, one has nothing to establish oneself on. So, animitta samadhi develops in that person because no signs arise for that person.

Appanīhita samadhi means again that there is nothing to establish oneself on. Why? This is because one realises that if there is only a process of cause and effect, then there is nothing to grasp and keep. It is then that this construction is seen as dukkha.

Suññata samadhi arises when a person realises with wisdom that there is only the law of cause and effect at work and that there is no entity called 'I'. So, here there is no 'I' that develops this samadhi. It arises when paññā develops and when the law of cause and effect is clearly seen.

If we say, we are trying to develop suññata samadhi, it is only a mental conception that has come up within us. We took it as nicca (permanent) because we did not see it with paññā. It is only if we think along these lines that the path will develop for us.

This is why Lord Buddha takes a bit of dirt on his nail to show that only a very few people, like the small amount of dirt on his nail, will understand the dhamma.

We have to make the dhamma part of us. We have to investigate the dhamma with wisdom, applying it to our lives. What we have to investigate is nothing but our own inner selves, our own lives. This is what is meant by 'paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī ti' (*can only be realised personally by the wise*).

Therefore, devotees, you need to comprehend this noble Saddharma (the true authentic dhamma) preached by Lord Buddha through your very lives. May the noble dhamma explained here help you all to investigate the truth through your lives!

Question

Bhante, Lord Buddha mentions 32 body parts in the Kāyānupassanā section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Here he does an analysis of the body. In your dhamma talk, you said that realisation of the dhamma arises beyond analysis. Bhante, can you please clarify this?

Answer

In Satipaṭṭhāna Vibhaṅga Sutta²⁵, Lord Buddha explains what is meant by satipaṭṭhāna, satipaṭṭhāna bhavana and satipaṭṭhāna bhavana margaya.²⁶ Today, our understanding of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is often limited to the first of these aspects. However, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta²⁷ has all three aspects.

Iti ajjhataṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati,
Bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati,
Ajjhatabhiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati

Thus he observes the origin (samudaya) of arisen phenomena internally (that which he takes as 'me' or that which he takes as 'I am'); or he observes the origin of arisen phenomena externally (that which he does not take as 'me' or that which he does not take as 'I am'); or he observes the origin of arisen phenomena both internally and externally (whether he takes arisen phenomena as 'me' or as 'I am' or whether he does not take them as 'me' or 'as 'I am').²⁸

Samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati,
Vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati
Samudaya-vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati

*He lives observing the arising of phenomena;
or he lives observing the non-arising of phenomena;
or he lives observing both the arising and non-arising of phenomena*

Na ca kiñci loke upadiyati

²⁵ Analysis of the Frames of Reference (SN 47:40)

²⁶ Satipaṭṭhāna means establishing sati to direct one's attention to the reflection of samudaya and vāya. Satipaṭṭhāna bhavana is reflecting on samudaya, vāya, and samudaya-vāya. Satipaṭṭhāna bhavana margaya is the Noble Eightfold Path.

²⁷ Frames of Reference/Foundations of Mindfulness (MN 10)

²⁸ When the meditator begins the practice of observing the origin of arisen phenomena, the division between phenomena he takes as 'me' or as 'I am' and phenomena he does not take as 'me' or as 'I am' is sharply defined. With the progression of the meditator's practice, this division becomes fluid. This is because he begins to see that what he takes as 'me' or as 'I am' in one instance he may not take as 'me' or as 'I am' in another instance (e.g. If I give you one of my kidneys I will not take it as mine once it has been transplanted in your body. I will take it as mine only while it is still in my body). Also, he begins to see that the division becomes less and less important because both types of phenomena arise due to the same causes.

And clings to nothing in the world

Evampi kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati

Thus, also bhikkhus, the bhikkhu lives contemplating the body²⁹

The above is the most important section in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The introductory section of Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta basically refers to something that helps to establish sati (mindfulness).

However, most often, what we take as satipaṭṭhāna is only this reference to the establishment of sati in the introductory section of the Sutta.

We do not understand the references made later to satipaṭṭhāna bhavana, which is the core, the very essence of satipaṭṭhāna. If we understand this correctly, we understand that we need to investigate paṭicca-samuppāda in the correct way according to cause and effect.

Atthi kāyo'ti vā panassa sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti

He assumes that there is a body for the purpose of developing wisdom in the future.

What this means is that the meditator assumes that there is a body only for the purpose of investigating the theory of paṭicca-samuppāda along the lines of 'samudayadhammānupassī vā' (contemplation of arising of phenomena) and 'vayadhammānupassī vā' (contemplation of the non-arising of phenomena). Why is this assumption made? To establish sati, so that when wisdom develops in the future, the state of 'na ca kiñci loke upadiyati' (clinging to nothing in the world) will arise. What is discovered when the origin of the body is investigated, when the reality of the assumed body is investigated? The meditator discovers the reason for the assumption that 'there is a body'? What is the reason for this assumption? The reason is avijjā. So, the meditator begins to investigate that wrong assumption, using the very body that was assumed.

Let me give a comparison to explain what the common practice of attending only to the first aspect of satipaṭṭhāna (the aspect of establishing sati) is like.

In order to build a house, we first need to build a scaffolding so that we can stand on the scaffolding and build the house. However, the scaffolding is not the house. If we mistakenly think that the scaffolding is the house, then we try to live on the scaffolding. Similarly, in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, Lord Buddha refers to the establishment of sati as the basic aspect. However, he also explains the essence of the other aspects. Simply taking the basic aspect without understanding the essence of the other aspects is no different to someone trying to reside on the scaffolding instead of the house.

²⁹ Contemplating the arising (samudaya) and non-arising (vaya)

We need to look for the underlying truth. Why do we have to assume that there is a body? To develop sati and wisdom. So, we need to investigate this fact, 'to develop sati and wisdom'. A person who investigates this will first develop sati but only to use it as a foundation. Such a person will then use this foundation to go beyond the established sati and attain the level of anāgāmī (non-returner) or arahant. So, what helps him attain these higher levels? The practice of establishing sati only for the sake of developing wisdom. So, why would such a person analyse the body by breaking it down into parts? It is not for the purpose of arriving at a mental conception that there is no body. Why would such a person assume that there is a body in the first place? It is only to help with the development of wisdom.

So, the truth of the assumption that 'there is' needs to be investigated. Now, we first assume that there is dukkha. We take dukkha as dukkha. After assuming dukkha, to say that it does not exist is not correct. What we need to do is investigate the construction of dukkha. This is why it is necessary to first assume that there is dukkha. If we do not assume that 'it is there', then we arrive at the conclusion 'it is not there'. This is a mental conception. Taking it as 'it is there' is also a mental conception. However, unless we assume that 'it is there', we cannot seek the truth. It is only when we investigate the nature of this assumption according to cause and effect that we find the true nature of the assumption that 'it is there'.

Na ca kiñci loke upadiyati

This means that we do not associate ourselves with the world. Therefore, the essential basis of every ānupassanā (contemplation) in the satipaṭṭhāna is the foundation of cause and effect. However, the initial aspect of every ānupassanā in the satipaṭṭhāna is something that only helps us establish sati.

If we practise satipaṭṭhāna in this manner, we will definitely attain the state of anāgāmī or arahant, within a minimum of seven days or within a maximum of seven years. However, this result is possible only if we practise satipaṭṭhāna with the foundation of cause and effect. This practice is not based on a mental conception, but on wisdom. When we investigate what we take as 'it is there' with wisdom and according to cause and effect, we achieve the state of 'na ca kiñci loke upadiyati'. We can also make an effort to say 'it is not there' through a mental conception. We can say 'it is not there' through a mental conception and live without rāga and dosa (aversion); but we will not realise the dhamma with wisdom. Realisation through wisdom takes place only when we investigate the causes of our assumption 'it is there'.

Then we see the laws of 'samudayadhammānupassī vā' and 'vayadhammānupassī vā'. When we see this, we achieve the state of 'na ca kiñci loke upadiyati' (*clinging to nothing in the world*).

When we see this, we live without associating ourselves with anything. We live without associating ourselves with kāyā (anissito ca viharati). There is in fact nothing that we can

associate ourselves with. We realise that our assumptions of ‘it is there’ or ‘it is not there’ are based on avijjā, and that when this basis does not exist, the assumptions we made on this basis also do not exist. Satipaṭṭhāna becomes the one and only path only when we practise it with the basis of cause and effect.

However, what we take from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is only that which helps us establish sati, because this is what we can understand.³⁰ We do not take what comes at the end. What is at the end of every ānupassanā is the main fact (which is the act of observing the arising of phenomena and the non-arising of phenomena). So, we need to focus on this main fact. It is only then that all this will get fully untangled.

Question

Lord Buddha has said that even in the form of a mental conception, when we observe the 32 body parts, we can eradicate rāga. What is bhante’s view on this?

Answer

Yes, we can temporarily remove rāga, but we cannot do so with moha. Once a deva (one born in the heavenly realms) asked the Buddha, ‘A person who is oppressed by birth and death is like someone whose head is on fire. Shouldn’t such a person try to eradicate kāmarāga (sensuous pleasure) with an effort greater than what one would apply to put out a fire on one’s head?’ Lord Buddha answered, ‘No, that is not what such a person should do. Such a person should try to eradicate sakkaya diṭṭhi with an effort greater than what one would apply to put out a fire on one’s head.’

Why is this so? It is because the main impediment is sakkaya diṭṭhi. Lord Buddha became devoid of rāga and dosa during his bodhisattva days. However, by removing rāga and dosa one cannot be devoid of moha (deception). I will explain this further. One can understand rāga because there are instances when there is no rāga. So, rāga can be understood because it is measured relatively. One can also understand dosa, because there are instances when there is no dosa. However, one cannot understand moha. Why? It is because moha is always there.

Who is the person who first understands situations without moha? The person who has attained the level of sotāpanna. He is able to understand situations with and without moha.

³⁰ What needs to be emphasised here is that satipaṭṭhāna is not just observing the appearance and disappearance of kaya, vedanā, citta and dhamma as commonly believed. It is also not just observing the details of kaya that has arisen (such as the duration and quality of the breath), or observing the details of vedanā that has arisen (such as sukha/dukkha/adukkama sukha vedanā), or observing the details of citta that has arisen (such as the scattered mind/the sensuous mind/lethargic mind), or observing the details of the dhammas that have arisen (such as the five hindrances) as commonly believed. Satipaṭṭhāna is the act of establishing sati for the sole purpose of investigating paṭicca-samuppāda, and engaging in this investigation.

We can temporarily remove rāga and dosa and go to the brahma realms, but we cannot do so with moha. This is because moha exists with the foundation of avijjā. It is only when the foundation of avijjā ceases to exist that we can eradicate moha. Lord Buddha's path to Nibbāna lies within this theory.

When we temporarily remove rāga and dosa, a practice that takes us to the brahma worlds develops. However, it does not help us develop a practice that eradicates sakkaya diṭṭhi. For this, we need to eradicate avijjā. Therefore, we can understand moha only when the four-fold wisdom of dukkhe ñāṇaṃ, dukkhasamudaye ñāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhe ñāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhagāminipadāya ñāṇaṃ arise within us. Until then we cannot eradicate moha.

We cannot eradicate moha because we take this world as something that exists. Rāga and dosa actually exist due to moha, because in what we take as moha there is also rāga and dosa. However, we can stop rāga from arising within us by just forming a mental conception that what we assumed as 'there is' does not exist or by breaking it down into parts and forming a mental conception that it does not exist.

In other words, rāga and dosa do not arise in us when we think that what we assumed as 'there is' does not exist. This is why when rāga arises within us we have to develop asubha (reflection on repulsiveness), and when dosa arises within us we have to develop mettā (loving kindness). When rāga and dosa do not arise, we do not accumulate akusala kamma through them.

However, we cannot eradicate avijjā and bhava taṇhā (craving for existence) in this manner. These are the factors that make us wander on in saṃsāra. These are also the factors that cause rāga and dosa. As long as avijjā and bhava taṇhā exist, our saṃsāric wandering will never cease.

However, as we keep wandering on in saṃsāra with avijjā and bhava taṇhā, we need to reduce rāga and dosa so that we pave the way for sugati (happy states of existence). Otherwise we could end up in dugati (unhappy states of existence). Although we may reduce rāga and dosa, as long as avijjā and bhava taṇhā exist, our saṃsāric journey does not cease.

We need to examine our lives well. We need to think within Lord Buddha's dhamma in relation to everything. Very often, we do not focus on the aspects we should think about.

Bāhiya Darucheera, Upatissa Paribrajaka and Ajita Manawaka asked about what they needed to reflect on. Pārāyana Vagga³¹ mentions sixteen people like this. All sixteen of them had developed their minds up to the level of ashta samāpatti (eight attainments)³². They all asked about what they needed to reflect on. 'What conceals dukkha?' 'It is concealed by avijjā'.

³¹ The Chapter on the Way to the Far Shore (Snp 5.1 – 5.17)

³² Eight Jhanas

“Avijjāya nivuto loko, (ajitāti bhagavā)
Vivicchā pamādā nappakāsati;
Jappābhilepanam brūmi,

*“Due to avijjā is the world hemmed-in. (the Blessed One to Ajita)
It does not shine due to doubt and heedlessness.
It is smeared with greed.*

Dukkhamassa mahabbhayan”ti.

*Its great-fear is suffering”.*³³

They had all developed ashta samapatti. Their minds were devoid of rāga and dosa. However, they had not searched their inner selves. So they began to search their inner selves.

After seeing the Four Great Signs, the Bodhisattva did a systemic search for the path of liberation from dukkha. He went to Alara Kalama and Uddakarama Putta for this purpose. They had removed kāma and rāga on a long-term basis. However, the consolation they achieved was limited to that particular mind frame. As soon as they emerged from it they were again beset by dukkha.

We generate both rāga and dosa through a mental conception. So, we can get rid of these mental conceptions temporarily, but we cannot eradicate moha. We can eradicate moha only by seeing the truth.

The Bodhisattva began to search for the causes that make this so. He gave up all his teachers and continued with his search. He saw the theory of Paṭicca-samuppāda and concluded that these are the reasons for our saṃsāric journey. The entire Buddha dhamma is based on the law of cause and effect. Lord Buddha explained moha known as avijjā and also taṇhā, the two causes that take us on our saṃsāric journey, in a way that helps to eradicate them both. We cannot grasp this. This is because we do not think the way we need to think.

I explained before that if we take an ordinary written composition, we see it only as that. If we take something that requires our reflection, then we begin to apply our yoniso manasikāra. Then we see it with paññā. Therefore, when we practise this path and when we see dukkha that gets constructed through all this, wisdom arises. Wisdom is the knowing that the construction of dukkha is due to the foundation of avijjā and that when we know that this is the cause of dukkha, the construction will cease to exist.

With that wisdom, there arises a deep consolation within us. It is not something that we see though a mental conception. Why do we first take ‘there is’ as a mental conception? As an

³³ Sodhanahāravibhaṅga - Netti - Paṭiniddesavāra (Vibhanga 13)

aid to the development of that wisdom; as a basis for that wisdom. We take this mental conception of ‘there is’ only for the purpose of developing the path and not for the purpose of living with it. Therefore, Lord Buddha explains how to investigate our inner selves by establishing sati in satipaṭṭhāna and by doing contemplative meditation after establishing sati.

Question

Bhante, can you please explain how we can use meditation to develop our yoniso manasikāra?

Answer

In order to develop our yoniso manasikāra, we need something to investigate from within. Responding to one of Alawaka’s questions, Lord Buddha said that paññā arises when we investigate with diligence the dhamma we have heard.

Lord Buddha has given us a theory such as avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam. These are just words for us. We need to investigate this through our lives to find out what it means.

If we know what avijjā is, what saṅkhāra is, we need to investigate it through our lives. We need to find out why it happens this way. We first accept with saddhā (faith) what Lord Buddha has said. Then we see that what we accepted with saddhā is true.

This happens because of saddhā. We get to see the truth based on saddhā, only when we investigate what we accepted, to see how it all happens. It is by trying to investigate it in order to understand it that our thinking ability develops.

The Arahant Assaji said to Upatissa Paribrajaka,
“Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā, tesam hetum tathāgato āha, tesamca yo nirodho - evaṁvādī mahāsamaṇo”

Of those phenomena which arise from causes: Those causes have been taught by the Tathāgata (Buddha), And their cessation too - thus proclaims the Great Ascetic.

This was enough for him to develop his yoniso manasikāra. Today we have a lot of facts to develop our yoniso manasikāra.

We have the theory of paṭicca-samuppāda and the process of the pañcupādānakkhandhā (the five clinging aggregates). If we carefully study Lord Buddha’s discourses, we find something that we need to think about. If we do not understand them, we need to try to understand them by thinking about them. It is when we think that there is something for us to think about that our yoniso manasikāra develops.

We cannot see Lord Buddha’s dhamma with our minds. We cannot see it either with our physical eyes. We can see it only with paññā. If we understand the dhamma when we hear it,

we will realise it there and then. If we do not understand it when we hear it then we will have questions about it. Even if we understand it when we hear it, we may still have questions about it. It is only then that our thinking ability develops. The more we think about it the more we develop internally. When a question comes up like this, we become aware that there is something that we need to think about.

We must understand that we need to think about how paṭicca-samuppāda is constructed. When we think about it, wisdom develops within us. This is what is called thinking ability. It is only then that the eye of dhamma arises within us. So, paññā arises when we know that we did not understand it and when we apply our yoniso manasikāra to try to understand it.

As I explained using the comparison of how we solve a Mathematical problem, here too, when we think based on the theory, our yoniso manasikāra develops. At first, the basis of dhamma we have learnt is just some words such as avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam. Now we need to investigate it using the meaning of the words. We need to question, ‘How does this happen?’ ‘What does this mean?’ We need to think along these lines.

The more we think like this the more our yoniso manasikāra develops within us. Then the eye that can see what avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra is begins to arise in us. We see with this eye which is the eye of paññā. We see the theory of paṭicca-samuppāda such as avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam with this eye of paññā.

We need to investigate all the aspects of paṭicca-samuppāda one by one. Lord Buddha advises us in the Parivimsana Sutta³⁴ and the other suttas to investigate them; to analyse them; to do arya paryeshana (noble search) on them. Why does he say all this? To help us develop yoniso manasikāra within us.

‘Janati Passati - *Live with knowing and seeing*’. Lord Buddha explains this in the Lokavalo Sutta³⁵ and the Dittagata Sutta³⁶. He explains that worldly beings follow two extremes. One does atidhavana (goes beyond limits or boundaries); the other remains holding. We follow the second extreme. Those who follow the first extreme try to reject things. However, they are both extremes.

“Kathaṅ-ca bhikkhave cakkhumanto passanti? idha bikkhu bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ passati, bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ disvā bhūtaṃ nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya paṭipanno hoti. evaṃ kho bhikkhave cakkhumanto ca passantī” ti.³⁷

³⁴ Investigating (SN 12: 51)

³⁵ Surveying the World (Ud 3:10)

³⁶ Evil of Philosophical Viewpoints (Iti 2.49)

³⁷ Evil of Philosophical Viewpoints

How, bhikkhus, do those with vision see? Herein a bhikkhu sees what has come to be as having come to be. Having seen it thus, he practices the course for turning away, for dispassion, for the cessation of what has come to be. Thus, bhikkhus, do those with vision see. How does one who has the eye of paññā see things? What has arisen is seen according to how it arose. When rāga and dosa arise, how they arose is seen. When what has arisen with avijjā as condition and the manner in which it arose is seen, when its false foundation is seen, what has arisen loses its strength. Then he neither remains holding it nor goes beyond limits to reject it. The true nature of what has arisen is seen. That is why when we investigate the assumption we make in satipaṭṭhāna that ‘there is a body or mind or vedanā or dhamma,’ we do not have to get rid of that assumption.

Na ca kiñci loke upadiyati anissito ca viharati

We do not associate ourselves with it.

This is because we have not accepted anything. Why so? It is because we have seen with the eye of paññā how this foundation is constructed. As it is with this eye that we need to see, we need to investigate the dhamma to generate the eye. When we keep investigating, the eye of paññā will arise someday. We should not have any expectations. Very often, we want to get over and done with it because we are afraid of wandering on in saṃsāra. We want to liberate ourselves from saṃsāra.

If we want to find the truth, we need to look for it someday. What is meant by the truth is seeing that there is no attā³⁸. The person who sees it is not ‘I’. When the truth is seen, the wisdom that there is no attā arises.

If we seek the truth someday, if the path is correct, our aim will be clear. When we try to find something, we will never find it if the path is incorrect.

So we need to investigate the dhamma. When we investigate the dhamma, we will see the truth someday. When we see the truth, we will see that there is no person or being. It is not ‘I’ that sees that there is no person or being. When the truth is seen, the wisdom that there is no ‘self’ or personality arises.

If we look for the truth someday, and if our path is correct, our aim will be clear. When we try to achieve something, we will never find what we are seeking if the path is incorrect.

Question

Bhante, when we investigate the rebirth of beings, it is not possible to say that it is there or not there. Is it only a construction, bhante?

³⁸ attā refers to a permanent, unchanging self or soul which transmigrates from birth to birth

Answer

It is a construction. We keep wandering on in saṃsāra with a mental conception of a being. A problem that we had in the past is the thinking that viññāṇa goes from bhava to bhava. This is because one person says that there is a permanent existence and another person says that there is no permanent existence. However, if we see that it is only a construction, with that realisation the two extremes of 'there is' and 'there is not' will disappear.

It is not correct to say that 'there is not'. It is also not correct to say that 'there is'.

Instead of going along with these two extremes, if we see according to cause and effect, we will see nothing but a construction. The two extremes of 'there is' and 'there is not' exist because we do not see the truth. Then the question whether a person or being exists disappears completely.

It is I that say 'there is not', that there is no entity called 'I'. It is not correct to take 'I' as existing and then say that 'I' do not exist. If I say that there is no entity called 'I', it is not correct because I am the one who says it. When I exist as a being, to say that 'I do not exist' is wrong. So, we can never say, 'there is no being, no person, no I'.

It is only a wrong view. What is ingrained within us is the basis that I exist. When we investigate along this, what we realise is what is called anattā. It is not something that we accept through a mental conception. It is what we see when we see the construction of things. If we see the dhamma in this manner with the eye of paññā, what we will see in this dhamma is the non-construction of things – not the construction of things. We look for various things through the process of construction. When the eye of paññā arises, everything that gets constructed will disappear. If we understand this theory correctly, the views of 'there is' and 'there is not' will also disappear.

Theruwān Saranai!

³⁹After residing in Benares as long as he wished, Lord Buddha proceeded from Benares to Uruvela, and on his way he entered a grove and sat under a tree.

At that time, thirty Bhadda-Vaggiya brothers were wandering in that grove with their wives. As one of them did not have a wife, they had brought along a courtesan for him, but while they were not watching she had taken his jewellery and fled.

So, in order to help him, the rest of the brothers wandered through the grove looking for her, and saw Lord Buddha sitting under a tree. They approached him and inquired, 'Lord, did you see a woman?' When Lord Buddha asked, 'Why are you looking for her?' they explained their problem to him.

'What do you think, young men,' Buddha replied, 'which is better for you, to go in search of a woman or to go in search of yourselves?'

The brothers admitted, 'It is better to go in search of ourselves'. Lord Buddha then preached the dhamma to them. At the end of the discourse, they all gained the eye of paññā called sotāpanna, which is the first step in the search for oneself.

³⁹ Mahavagga Pali 1

Glossary

Anattā: This is often rendered in texts as ‘non-self’. However, this translation may be subject to misinterpretation. Anattā can be better explained with respect to the dependent origination of phenomena (paṭicca-samuppāda). According to this, all phenomena arise due to causes and conditions. For example, phenomena such as form, sensations, thoughts etc. we commonly regard as self arise dependent on certain causes and conditions, just like a shadow cast is the effect created by the cause of light hitting an object. As the shadow cannot be created without this cause, it is not possible to say that it was created by its own doing. Likewise, as phenomena arise dependent on causes and conditions, it is not appropriate to say that they have a ‘self.’ Thus, according to the anattā doctrine, phenomena which merely arise dependent on causes and conditions cannot be taken as ‘I’, ‘mine’ or ‘myself’.

According to the dhamma, anattā is realised when one sees that it is inappropriate to take the pañcupādānakkhandhā (which is constructed by causes and conditions) as ‘I’, ‘mine’ or ‘myself’. Therefore, anattā should not be taken as my inability to control things or my inability to keep things in my possession as commonly thought today, which is an interpretation based on sakkāya diṭṭhi.

Anicca: According to the dhamma, anicca refers to the instability or impermanence of phenomena. They are unstable and impermanent because they are constructed by causes. Therefore, anicca should not be taken as the destruction or disappearance of something that already exists, such as the destruction of a building, or the healing of a disease, or the deterioration of the human body. The destruction or disappearance of something that already exists is the worldly view of anicca. It is not the anicca that one sees with wisdom and paññā.

Arahant: The Holy One, the highest level of sainthood. An Arahant is freed from all the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth. The state of an arahant is completely devoid of avijjā, māna, uddacca (restlessness), rūpa raga (attachment to the form realms) and arūpa raga (attachment to the formless realms).

This state is also referred to in the dhamma as overcoming the construction of all phenomena, liberation from pancha-upadankkandha, the eradication of all formations that arise due to cause and effect, the non-establishment of the four primary elements, and the non-arising of nāma-rūpa.

Avijjā: Ignorance of the nature of reality, especially in regards to the Four Noble Truths - *dukkha-sacca* (truth of suffering), *samudaya-sacca* (truth of its cause), *nirodha-sacca* (truth of its cessation) *magga-sacca* (truth of the path leading to its cessation). In other words, avijjā is not knowing the true nature of pañcupādānakkhandhā (the five aggregates) – rūpa (form), vedanā (feeling), saññā (perception), saṅkhāra (intention), and viññāṇa

(consciousness). This means not knowing that pañcupādānakkhandhā is a construction and that in fact, it is the construction of dukkha. Avijjā also means not knowing how this dukkha is constructed, that is, not knowing and seeing paṭicca-samuppāda.

Āyatana: See Salayatana

Bhava: Commonly translated as ‘becoming’ in the texts.

In the context of paṭicca-samuppāda, bhava is the three types of sañcetanā (volition) that arise due to the deep, ingrained sense that there is a body, a mind and words. These are known as kaya sañcetanā (intention with regard to the body), mano sañcetanā (intention with regard to the mind) and vaci sañcetanā (intention with regard to words). These sañcetanā form the three-fold bhava referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda.

Bhava-taṇhā: See Taṇhā

Bojjhaṅga: The 7 factors of enlightenment which are sati-sambojjhanga (mindfulness with clear comprehension), investigation of the law (dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhanga), effort (viriya-sambojjhanga) rapture (piti-sambojjhanga), tranquillity (passaddhi-sambojjhanga), concentration (samadhi-sambojjhanga), equanimity (uppekha).

Cetasika: Mental factors which are bound up with the simultaneously arising consciousness and conditioned by its presence.

Dhamma: This term has several dimensions and meanings depending on the context. Within the context of this book, Dhamma is the liberating law of nature discovered and proclaimed by the Buddha.

Dosa: Aversion, hate, anger

Dukkha: Dukkha is referred to in the dhamma as threefold – dukkha dukkha (ordinary conventional suffering), viparināma dukkha (suffering due to change) and saṅkhāra dukkha (suffering due to formations or fabrications).

Ordinary suffering is pain and grief we experience due to all kinds of unpleasantness we encounter in this world, such as old age, sickness, death, not getting what we yearn for etc.

Suffering due to change is pain and grief we experience due to pleasantness changing to unpleasantness, such as the deterioration of our health, destruction of our house etc. This type of dukkha is related to the aspect of change which is the worldly view of anicca.

Suffering due to formations refers to the unsatisfactoriness of constructed phenomena. They are unsatisfactory because they are based on causes. It is this type of dukkha that is

referred to as sankittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkha (In short, pancha-upadankkandha itself is dukkha). Saṅkhāra dukkha is related to the aspect of impermanence that is dependent on causes, which is the supra-mundane view of anicca.

Jara marana: What is experienced by worldly beings as old age and death is referred to in the dhamma as jaramarana. These are nothing but sukha and dukkha that arise due to kaya sañcetanā (bodily volitions), mano sañcetanā (mental volitions) and vaci sañcetanā (verbal volitions).

Jati: The arising of kandha and ayatana is referred to as jati or birth in the dhamma. Therefore, jati referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda is not a person being born from his or her mother's womb.

Kāma-taṇhā: See Taṇhā

Kamma: Wholesome or unwholesome action which conditions future results.

Kandha: Kandha means heaps, aggregates, collections, or groupings. According to the dhamma, these are the five upadankkandha of rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra and viññāṇa. It is not mentioned in the dhamma that the kandhas arise without upadana (strong attachment), although this is a widely-held belief today. This is because as long as there is avijjā, kandhas arise along with upadana. This fact is common to ordinary worldlings as well as to the sekas (those who have attained a maggaphala below arhat). The arising of kandha is not relevant to the state of arhat, because this state denotes the eradication of avijjā without a trace and going **beyond** all construction. Therefore, it is not appropriate to think that an arahant has kandha without upadana.

Māna: This is one of the fetters which gets eradicated when attaining arahantship. This is the fetter of measuring and judging. This typically shows as the propensity to compare oneself with others and pertains to that of having conceit.

Nibbāna: Literally, 'extinction' or to become extinguished. A state in which nothing arises nor passes away. It is characterised by the total extinction of the three types of mental defilements which perpetuate the cycle of death and rebirth: the mental defilements of sensual pleasures, craving for existence and ignorance.

Nimiti: Plural form of nimitta. Nimitta has two main meanings; i) outward/general appearance or ii) object of senses, perceptions, of attention, concentration or meditation.

Pañcupādānakkhandhā: The combination of the five aggregates, namely, rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra and viññāṇa, is referred to in the dhamma as pañcupādānakkhandhā. This is a process that is constructed through the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose, the body and the mind and their corresponding sense input as well as viññāṇas (consciousnesses). This is

what is referred to in the world as seeing with my eye, hearing with my ear, tasting with my tongue, smelling with my nose, sensing with my body and thinking with my mind. What actually happens in these situations is the arising of pancha upadankkandha. This arising of pancha upadankkandha is referred to in the dhamma as dukkha (sankittena pancha upadankkandha dukkha – in short, pancha upadankkandha itself is dukkha).

Paññā: Often translated as ‘wisdom’. However, this may be partially misleading as this English word can imply there is a ‘self’ and the wisdom can be developed from intellectualism. Rather, paññā is the faculty that naturally arises from seeing the reality of how phenomena come to be.

Paññā therefore, is not worldly wisdom. It has the characteristics of discernment and the ability to gain insight into the nature of reality. In other words, it is realising the dhamma, such as the ariya sacca (four noble truths), tilakkhana (the three characteristics of existence), and paṭicca-samuppāda (dependent origination). This is not an understanding gained through the eye or the mind. For this kind of higher level seeing and realising, one must develop the eye of paññā. The eye of paññā develops with yoniso-manasikara (reflecting on the cause and effect of phenomena). This kind of investigation has to start with the ordinary mind, using worldly wisdom. However, ultimate realisation is attained with paññā, which is going beyond the ordinary mind and worldly wisdom.

Paṭicca-samuppāda: Dependent origination

Phassa: This is the meeting of the eye, form and eye viññāṇa; the ear, sound and ear viññāṇa; the tongue, taste and tongue viññāṇa; the nose, smell and nose viññāṇa; the body, sensation and body viññāṇa; and the mind, thought and mind viññāṇa. It is referred to as ‘tinnam sangati phasso’ (the union of the three is phassa) in the dhamma.

Rāga: Attachment to sense objects. According to the dhamma the cause of raga is the arising of a pleasant nimitta and not reflecting on its cause and effect. Therefore, raga should be seen as a phenomenon based on causes.

Rūpa: Rūpa (form) varies in meaning depending on the context.

Rūpa-khandha: In the context of the five aggregates of clinging, rūpa is the four primary elements of patavi (earth), apo (water), thejo (heat), vayo (air) and the four upadaya rūpa (rūpa derived from the primary elements) of varna (colour), gandha (smell), rasa (taste) and oja (nutrition). Rūpa is derived from the Pali word ‘ruppati’ which can be defined as changing or turning into a different state due to sun, rain, heat, cold, hunger etc. In the dhamma, the human body is given as an example of an entity that is subject to this kind of change. As this is just an example, it is not appropriate to take the human body as rūpa, as commonly done today.

Also, in the context of the five clinging aggregates, rūpa does not denote the actual physical object made up of the four great elements or the upadaya rūpa. It is rather the mental

imprint of the objects (arammana) such as of sight, smell, taste, feeling, hearing and cognition. As an example, the kāyā (physical body), such as your arm, that is made up of the four great elements is not rūpa-khandha. It is the mental imprint such as taking it to be “my arm” that is the rūpa-khandha. These imprints arise seemingly automatically.

Rūpa-āyatana: This refers to any external visual input (form) sensed from the eye sense base (one of the six sense bases of āyatana).

Nāma-rūpa: This is the fourth link in the twelve links of dependent origination. It arises from viññāṇa as a condition. Nāma-rūpa has two parts. Nāma denotes vedanā (feeling), saññā (perception), cethana (volition), passa (contact), manasikara (attention). Rūpa denotes the four great elements and the four upadaya rūpa as explained above.

Nāma and rūpa are mutually dependent, which means that they are mutually supported. This means that rūpa cannot exist without nāma and vice versa. The processing of rūpa by nāma is the activity performed by nāma and rūpa.

Sacca: Truth

Saddhā: Conviction or faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha that makes one investigate the teachings and put it into practice.

Sakkāya diṭṭhi: The view that there is a ‘self’ existing behind or within the five aggregates (Rūpa, Vedanā, Saññā, Saṅkhāra and Viññāṇa). This is a false view that is abandoned once one attains stream entry.

Salayatana: These are the six sense bases. They refer to the six internal ayatana (the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose, the body, and the mind) and the six external ayatana (the associated objects of the external ayatanas, namely, visual form, sound, taste, smell, sensation and thought). The internal and external ayatana are mutually dependent, which means that they are mutually supported. Therefore, they are referred to in the dhamma as six pairs that exist as the eye and form, ear and sound, tongue and taste, nose and smell, body and sensation and mind and thought.

Samma diṭṭhi: Having the ‘right’ view. The first type is a worldly view, which is the understanding of the law of cause and consequence with regards to morality of actions.

The second type is the supra-mundane view, which is the realisation of the four noble truths (truth of dukkha, cause of dukkha, cessation of dukkha and path leading to cessation of dukkha). This realisation is gained not by seeing the Four Noble Truths with the eye or the mind, but seeing them with the eye of paññā. In fact, this realisation comes when one gains a clear understanding of paṭicca-samuppāda through yoniso manasikāra. According to the dhamma, a person who has gained the realisation of the four noble truths is one who has started walking the path to nibbana. In other words, such a person is considered to be a sotapanna.

Samsāra: The round of rebirth, the continuous process of being born, growing old, suffering and dying.

Samudaya: The arising, origin, or cause of phenomena.

Saṅkhāra: The word saṅkhāra occurs in different contexts in the dhamma. Firstly, the word occurs as a designation for all formations that arise based on causes and conditions. In this context, the word has a passive derivation, denoting whatever is formed by a combination of conditions. Here it means simply formations and includes all five aggregates as well as all external objects.

Secondly, the word saṅkhāra occurs as the fourth khandha (aggregate) in pañcupādānakkhandhā (five aggregates). Here it means volitional formations. It refers to the sixfold volition, namely, volition regarding forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and ideas.

The word saṅkhāra also occurs as the second link in the paṭicca-samuppāda series. It is said to be conditioned by ignorance and to function as a condition for viññāṇa. Here, the word refers to the ingrained sense that there is a body, a mind and words. In other words, this is the anusaya (latent tendency) that there is kaya (bodily) saṅkhāra, mano (mental) saṅkhāra and vaci (verbal) saṅkhāra. Therefore, saṅkhāra is a deeply ingrained sense that a body, mind and words exist as opposed to the conscious thoughts that a body, mind and words exist. This is the saṅkhāra referred to as avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra (with avijjā as a condition, saṅkhāra arises) in Paṭicca-samuppāda.

Skilful and unskilful volition is also referred to as saṅkhāra in the dhamma. In this context, it is known as punnabhi saṅkhāra (skilful volition), apunnabhi saṅkhāra (unskilful volition) and anenjabhi saṅkhāra (imperturbable volition). These threefold saṅkhāra exist relative to a person. This means that they are constructed due to the construction of a 'person'. Therefore, they should not be taken as the saṅkhāra mentioned in Paṭicca-samuppāda as avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra.

Saññā: Saññā is perception. It is the act of perceiving rūpa, sadda, rasa, gandha, pottabba and dhamma. Therefore, saññā is referred to as sixfold in the dhamma, namely, rūpa saññā, sadda saññā, rasa saññā, gandha saññā, pottabba saññā and damma saññā. According to paṭicca-samuppāda, these sixfold saññā arise due to phassa (contact). Therefore, phassa nirodha (cessation of phassa) is given as the condition of saññā nirodha (cessation of saññā).

Satipaṭṭhāna: Commonly translated as the four foundations of mindfulness. This is the four-fold observation of the origin of; kaya (body), vedanā, citta (mind) and dhamma (thoughts) ie. reflecting on how kaya, vedanā, citta and dhamma arose or came to be. So, what needs to be emphasised here is that satipaṭṭhāna is not just observing the appearance and disappearance of kaya, vedanā, citta and dhamma as commonly believed.

Khandha: Designates; heaps, aggregates, collections, or groupings. According to the dhamma, these are the five upadanakkandha of rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra and viññāṇa. It is not mentioned in the dhamma that the kandhas arise without upadana (strong attachment), although this is a widely-held belief today. This is because as long as there is avijjā, kandhas arise along with upadana. This fact is common to ordinary worldlings as well as to the sekas (those who have attained a maggaphala below arahant). The arising of kandha is not relevant to the state of arhat, because this state denotes the eradication of avijjā without a trace and going beyond all construction. Therefore, it is not appropriate to think that an arahant has kandha without upadana.

Sotāpanna: First stage of sainthood (stream-winner). The Sotāpanna has realised the truth of the noble ones to some extent and is on the path to full enlightenment (entered the stream to Nibbāna). The Sotāpanna has let go of the three lower fetters which bind one to the cycle of rebirth; sakkāya diṭṭhi, sceptical doubt (vicikicchā), and the attachment to mere rites and rituals (sīlabbata parāmāsa). The Sotāpanna will have at most 7 rebirths until attainment of final liberation (Nibbāna).

Taṇhā: Within the dependent origination (paṭicca-samuppāda), taṇhā is the ‘thirst’ (craving) that leads to attachment. It arises in relation to the six sense objects (visual form, sound, smell, taste, touch and mental objects). Therefore, taṇhā referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda is the six-fold taṇhā, namely; rūpa taṇhā, sadda taṇhā, rasa taṇhā, gandha taṇhā, pottabba taṇhā and dhamma taṇhā. This taṇhā is the attachment to the six external ayatanas of rūpa, sadda, rasa, gandha, pottabba, and dhamma. This is the taṇhā referred to in paticca samupada as vedanā paccaya taṇhā.

Taṇhā is also referred to in the dhamma as the threefold taṇhā, namely, thirst (craving) for sense pleasures (kāma-taṇhā), thirst (craving) for existence (bhava-taṇhā), and thirst (craving) for non-existence (vibhava-taṇhā). However, this is an analysis done with respect to a person. Therefore, one should not take this three-fold taṇhā as the taṇhā referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda as vedanā paccaya taṇhā (with vedanā as a condition taṇhā arises).

Upādāna: Upadana is strong attachment. It is referred to as four-fold in the dhamma, namely, kama upadana (attachment to sensual pleasures), ditti upadana (attachment to speculative beliefs), sīlabbata upadana (attachment to forms of ascetic habits) and attavada upadana (attachment to egoism). These four are phenomena conducive to upadana. In other words, they cause upadana to arise. This is because upadana arises when one lives with craving towards them. This is upadana referred to in paticca samupada.

Vaya: the non-arising of phenomena

Vedanā: This generally refers to the bare affective quality of an experience, which may be either pleasant, painful or neither pleasurable nor non-pleasurable. Commonly rendered as “feeling” in texts, it should be noted that this is not meant to signify emotion.

However, vedanā referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda are the six-fold vedanā, namely, cakku samapassaja vedanā (vedanā arising from eye contact), sota sampassaja vedanā, (vedanā arising from ear contact) jivha sampassaja vedanā, (vedanā arising from tongue contact) ghandha sampassaja vedanā, (vedanā arising from nose contact), kaya sampassaja vedanā (vedanā arising from body contact), and mano sampassaja vedanā (vedanā arising from mind contact). Here, vedanā is accepting with delight that the six internal ayatanas (sense bases) of the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose, the body and the mind really exist. This is the vedanā referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda as phassa paccaya vedanā (with phassa as a condition vedanā arises).

The threefold vedanā commonly found in texts is an analysis done with respect to the concept of there being a ‘person’. Therefore, one should not take this three-fold vedanā as the complete understanding of vedanā referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda as phassa paccaya vedanā (with phassa as a condition vedanā arises).

Vibhava-taṇhā: see Taṇhā

Viññāṇa: One of the five aggregates (pancha upadānaskandha). It is the aggregate that knows/cognises sense inputs and ideas as they occur. It is commonly translated as “consciousness” in texts.

However, viññāṇa referred to in paṭicca-samuppāda is the sixfold viññāṇa. They are cakku viññāṇa (eye consciousness), sota viññāṇa (ear consciousness), jivha viññāṇa (tongue consciousness), ghandha viññāṇa (nose consciousness), kaya viññāṇa (body consciousness) and mano viññāṇa (mind consciousness). The sixfold viññāṇa arise due to the anusaya (latent tendency) of taking that kaya (bodily) saṅkhāra, mano saṅkhāra and vaci saṅkhāra as existing, paving the way for our existence. This is done by creating a duality as ‘I’ or ‘what I am’ and what is external to ‘I’ or ‘what I am’ by making a division as the eye, rūpa (form) and cakku viññāṇa (eye consciousness); the ear, sound and sota viññāṇa (ear consciousness); the tongue, the taste and jivha viññāṇa (taste consciousness); the nose, smell and ghandha (nose consciousness); and the mind, thought and mano viññāṇa (mind-based consciousness). This is the magical illusion of viññāṇa.

With the acceptance that these ajjatta (internal) and bahidda (external) ayatana exist, the five upadānaskandhas (five aggregates) of rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra and viññāṇa arise. As soon as the viññāṇa is established in this manner it begins to develop. Then the act of knowing arises, namely, the knowing of colour, sound, taste, smell, sensation, thoughts, sukha (pleasant sensation), dukkha (unpleasant sensation), adukkhamā sukha (neutral sensation) etc. This kind of knowing is the function of a developed viññāṇa. We experience only this function of knowing and not the illusory nature of viññāṇa.

Vipassanā: The act of clear intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are, particularly with regards to dukkha, the origination of dukkha, the cessation of dukkha and the path leading to the cessation of dukkha.

Yoniso Manasikāra: Skilful attention or wise reflection on the origination of things (how they come to occur). This has two levels. The first level is investigating the dhamma to clarify and comprehend the dhamma one has heard. The second level is applying the dhamma to investigate how the world is constructed whenever one experiences the world. Engaging in yoniso-manasikara in this manner leads to the arising of the eye of paññā.

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Let us see with paññā

All through life
Amassing hopes and wishes
With unquenched desire
To find freedom from my dukkha
I tried to break the bonds
With great effort
Using various means
To destroy them one by one,
But only bound myself
Again and again
Instead of freeing myself
Due to grasping bhava.
So, dispelling the darkness
That envelopes samsāra
Breaking the bonds of taṇhā
Let us fully see
With paññā
Saṅkhāra dukkha,
Let us see
That the reason for dukkha is anicca.

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