

# A Discourse on the Cūḷavedalla Sutta

by  
The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw  
of  
Burma



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Bhikkhu Pesala  
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## Editor's Foreword

As with my other editions of the translated works of the late Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, I have removed many of the Pāli words for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the technical terms. The original translation was published in Rangoon in December 1981. The Sayādaw gave this discourse as a series of talks in 1964. To transcribe and translate the tape-recordings is a huge task, but one productive of great merit as it enables a much wider audience to benefit from the late Sayādaw's profound talks. This edition aims to extend the audience further still by publishing a modern edition on the Internet with a PDF file for those who want to print a copy.

References are to the Pāli text Roman Script editions of the Pali Text Society — in their translations, these page numbers are given in the headers or in square brackets in the body of the text. This practice is adhered to by Bhikkhu Bodhi's modern translations, It would be on a different page in the PTS translations, but since the Pāli page reference is given, it can be found in either translation. In the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana edition of the Pāli texts on CD, the references to the pages of the PTS Roman Script edition are shown at the bottom of the screen, and can be located by searching.

The Cūḷavedalla Sutta is the forty-fourth of the first fifty discourses in the Majjhimanikāya, named the "Shorter Series of Questions and Answers" in Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation, and it begins on page 396.

I have attempted to standardise the translation of Pāli terms to match that in other works by the Sayādaw, but it is impossible to be totally consistent as the various translations and editions are from many different sources. In the index you can find the Pāli terms in brackets after the translations, thus the index also serves as a glossary.

This was a difficult book to edit. The subject matter is profound, and the original edition contained large numbers of Pāli words. The Pāli passages quoted from the text of the Cūḷavedalla Sutta also needed to be replaced to add the required diacritical marks for the spelling of Pāli in Roman script. Many words were spelt using a phonetic Burmese variation of the Pāli, so these too had to be corrected. If I have inadvertently introduced some fresh errors, if they are drawn to my attention I will correct them in later editions.

Bhikkhu Pesala  
September 2021





## Translator's Preface

The Cūlavédalla Sutta stands out from others in the Sutta Piṭaka, which consists mainly of discourses delivered by the Buddha. It is so unlike any others that comparisons are barely relevant. It is highly profound, philosophical and comprehensive like those taught by the Blessed One. Elucidation of this Dhamma was made by no other person than the eminent Dhammadinnā, a female Arahant, who is well known for her rare wisdom and supernormal knowledge of the Arahant, being endowed with the four attainments peculiar to the Order of Arahants, called Paṭisambhidā, analytical knowledge. Pragmatic and superbly efficient, Dhammadinnā's answers to the intellectual and searching questions raised by Visākha, a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) on the intricacies of Buddha's Dhamma, are clear, precise and significant. The exquisite treatment of the Four Noble Truths, part by part, the clarification of the meaning of personality (*sakkāya*), analytical comment on the features of attachment (*upādāna*) and the aggregates of attachment (*upādānakkhandhā*), the different aspects of the Noble Truth of Cessation (*nirodhasaccā*), the eight path factors (*maggaṅga*), the causes for the development of concentration (*samādhi*), the manner of absorption in Nirodhasamāpatti, the method of dispelling various kinds of feelings (*vedanā*) through insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), the nature of latent tendencies (*anusaya*) and the characteristics of the four absorptions (*jhāna*) are the highlights that have been scientifically expounded in this Sutta.

To all those who are Buddhists or who are inclined towards the Buddhist religion, this Sutta should prove to be an incentive and a guide to tread on the Noble Eightfold Path to Enlightenment instead of remaining content to merely take refuge in the Saṅgha from whom they occasionally learn the Dhamma. In my earnest endeavour to translate this philosophical Dhamma, I have done the best that I could though my own qualifications are limited. It is my fervent hope that the clear exposition of this Sutta so benevolently and painstakingly rendered by the author of this book will be faithfully embraced in this translation.

The author of this book, the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma, whose fame has spread far and wide for his morality, concentration, and wisdom, needs no further introduction. Just as the Sutta is both academic and practical, the Author, holder of the Title of

Aggamahāpaṇḍita, and Chaṭṭha-Saṅgītipucchaka, is highly scholastic in the logical treatment of religious doctrines, and combined with his practical and mature insight-knowledge, the exposition of this Sutta becomes all the more interesting, realistic, and remarkable. This Discourse written and explained by the author is as convincing as any other sutta written by him, and going through this book page by page and line by line with concentrated attention, will probably lead to appreciation of the real essence of the Dhamma. The undoubted reliability of this Sutta and its fine presentation offered by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw in clear and unequivocal terms and in a most practical way is unique. The Buddha's Dhamma propounded in this Discourse is likely to appeal to a large number who are interested in learning the fundamental teachings of the Buddha to lead a way of life for individual happiness and peace of mind. To those devotees of Buddha, the principles of Dhamma explained in this Sutta will, it is believed, add to enhance the new powers of devotion and to the treasures of faith. What I sincerely feel is that this interesting Sutta will have a lasting imprint on the minds of the people of the West in general, who earnestly seek to know what the Buddha's Dhamma is.

One can really be spell-bound and absorbed in this Sutta if the thought is set down to grasp the essentials of the Dhamma contained in this Sutta. The questions raised by Visākha also reflect the intellectual ability of the interrogator, and the answers given by Dhammadinnā in this Sutta are really worthy of close study. According to the instructions given herein by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, if the reader diligently develops insight meditation for the attainment of the everlasting peace of nibbāna, my efforts to convince the reading public in a language other than my mother tongue to the best of my ability, will not be in vain. nibbāna is not non-existent. It is attainable by means of right exertion and relentless effort through the method of the Noble Eightfold Path. May you all be able to appreciate the true spirit of Buddha Dhamma herein explained and practise the path to final liberation.

Min Swe, Secretary

Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization

Mahāsi Sāsana Yeiktha, Yangon,

8th July, 1981

# Cūḷavedalla Sutta

## Prelude to the Sutta

Today is the 8th waxing day of the first month of Wāso in the year 1326 of the Burmese Era. The discourse to be delivered commencing from this day is on the Cūḷavedalla Sutta. This Sutta is from the first fifty Suttas of the Majjhimanikāya, which is one of the five collections of discourses, solemnly recited and canonised at the Sixth Buddhist Council. The Pāli texts include two Suttas: the Mahāvedalla and the Cūḷavedalla. “Vedalla” means a Sutta that was answered relying on the knowledge or wisdom (*veda*) to answer the question put on the strength of self-satisfaction derived therefrom. “Mahā” means great or large; “Cūḷa” means small. Therefore the Cūḷavedalla Sutta means the smaller version of the discourse answered on the strength of a thorough knowledge of the Dhamma, to the question put through elated self-satisfaction. The question was raised by Visākha, the multi-millionaire, and the answer was given by **Dhammadinnā**, an Arahant. The answers embodied in this Sutta are immensely valuable for serious study. It is of real benefit if put into practice, taking it as a cue with pride and honour and with an exultant feeling of faith and benevolence. Even the authors of the Commentaries quoted this Cūḷavedalla Sutta with authenticity.

## Introduction

The introduction to the Sutta begins: “*Evaṃ me suttaṃ — ekaṃ samayaṃ Bhagavā Rājagahe viharati Veluvane Kalandakanivāpe.*” This means, Venerable Ānanda first addressed Mahākassapa reverentially: “*Bhante* (Venerable sir), and then replied “Thus have I heard ...” This was the way in which the preliminary dialogue took place between the Venerable Mahākassapa and Venerable Ānanda who stated in reply to the question made by the former:—

“Where was this Cūḷavedalla Sutta delivered? Who delivered it? Why was it delivered? To whom was this discourse delivered? The Venerable Ānanda answered, “At one time the Blessed One was residing at the Bamboo Grove monastery near the city of Rājagaha.

This monastery was erected in this way. At the end of the first Rainy Season (*vassa*) at the beginning of the month of Thadingyut, the Buddha made his way to the Uruvela forest and converted one thousand hermits led by Uruvela Kassapa. These one thousand

hermits, having attained Arahantship after conversion, went with the Buddha to Rājagaha where King Bimbisāra resided. He had earlier extended his invitation to the Blessed One. On their arrival, King Bimbisāra, accompanied by a retinue of twelve hundred thousand, gave a grand reception to honour the Blessed One. On this auspicious occasion, eleven hundred thousand attained Stream-winning after listening to the Buddha's teaching. The remaining one-hundred thousand became his lay-disciples (*upāsaka*) having taken refuge in the Triple Gem — the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. This is recorded in the Vinaya Mahāvagga as follows:—

### How Stream-winning Was Attained

At that time, being capable of knowing other's thoughts, the Blessed One taught the Dhamma in serial order to twelve hundred thousand lay people consisting of high caste brahmins and others. His discourse taught the fundamentals of charity (*dānakathaṃ*), and morality (*sīlakathaṃ*), the benefits derived from devotion to acts of charity and morality that could elevate human beings to the celestial realms after death (*saggakathaṃ*), the defects and inferiority of the pursuit of the illusory happiness of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ*), the impurities of the defiling passions (*okāraṃ saṃkilesaṃ*), the way to escape from the fetters of sensual pleasures, and the advantages that will accrue by developing concentration and insight to renounce them (*nekkhamme ānisaṃsaṃ*).

It must be understood that this discourse taught us to perform charity and to strictly observe morality, and that the merits derived therefrom would lead one to the abodes of celestial beings. However, since attachment to such prosperity and the apparent happiness enjoyed by living beings is so strong, suffering is bound to be met with, either by descending to the lower realms or by going through the natural process of old age, disease, and death in the cycles of existence. By developing absorption (*jhāna*), one would be liberated from the whirlpool of sensual pleasures and elevated to the *brahmā* realms in the next life, where there is great bliss. Through the diligent practice of meditation when insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) is achieved, one would be totally free from the dangers and adversity of the cycle of existence.

How could it be known that the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) were dispelled while the audience was listening attentively to this discourse? The Buddha knew whether the minds of those in the audience were composed and receptive, pliant and free from hindrances, enthusiastic, and free from impurities without the slightest hesitation. Knowing this, the Buddha, who had himself acquired the true Dhamma and gained Enlightenment by his own efforts, concisely explained the Four Noble Truths. This expression denotes that the audience who formed the congregation was entirely free from hindrances (obstacles to a religious life) having been endowed with the purity of mind. It also illustrates that the mind, by becoming firm and tranquil it is free from sensual feelings or lustful thoughts (*kāmacchanda*); by being pliant and supple (*mudu*) it becomes free of ill-will, hatred, or anger (*vyāpāda*); by being alert and enthusiastic (*kallacitta*) it becomes free from sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*); by being purified with implicit faith becomes free from sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*); and by being unfettered (*vinīvaraṇa citta*), it is free from restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*). While the mind of the audience was thus purified and free from hindrances, The Buddha knew that it was the opportune moment to clarify the Dhamma relating to the Four Noble Truths.

He then taught that since the mind and matter comprising the aggregates of attachment (*upādānakkhandhā*), which reacts at every moment of seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing through the six sense doors, is incessantly arising and vanishing, it is in fact suffering and unsatisfactory. This state of phenomena and their effects is the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-saccā*). That attachment with pleasure to such suffering, which cause rebirth with its concomitant pain, grief, and sorrow, is the Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya-saccā*). If the defects and unsatisfactoriness of mind and matter were truly appreciated, the cause of craving is extirpated, which will lead to the knowledge of the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha saccā*). Then the realisation of the nature of mind and matter through contemplation by means of insight meditation will ultimately lead to the Noble Path, which is the Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*magga saccā*).

In the course of paying wholehearted attention to this discourse on the Dhamma, out of the entire audience, eleven hundred thousand

people of Māgadha including King Bimbisāra, brahmins and other laity, attained Stream-winning on the spot. It may be noted that at the moment of absorption in the Fruition of the Path, mindfulness and awareness become oblivious to the arising and dissolution of mind and matter, being serene and tranquil. Similar insight knowledge or awareness also prevails in the higher stages of the Path.

The other ten thousand people in the audience, having gained absolute confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, became lay disciples. As stated above, after becoming a Stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), King Bimbisāra reverentially expressed his joy with gratitude to the Blessed One and extended his invitation to the Buddha and his disciples to a meal.

On the following day, the Buddha and his one thousand disciples availed themselves of the feast hosted at the palace. After the completion of the ceremony, King Bimbisāra generously donated the pleasure garden of the Bamboo Grove (Veḷuvana) to the Buddha and the Saṅgha, which the Buddha accepted. This was the first donation of a monastery. Of course, there must have been a number of buildings in use by the king and his courtiers in the precincts of the Bamboo Grove. However, judging by the manner of the donation and its acceptance, it is clear that the donated property was to the community (Saṅghika), meaning a monastic compound (*ārāma*) or monastery (*vihāra*). Hence, the acceptance. At that time, Buddha in response to the offer of donation, pronounced the words: *“Anujānami bhikkhave ārāmaṃ,”* which means “I, allow the said donated land with the monastery standing thereon to be accepted.” Explanation is given here explicitly and precisely so as to convey full knowledge about the Veḷuvana Monastery. Next, the wealthy Visākha was one among the people who had achieved Stream-winning together with King Bimbisāra. This rich man was an extraordinary person who took the role of an interrogator in this Cūḷavedalla Sutta. He was the man who had done great meritorious deeds along with the person, the would-be King Bimbisāra, during the time of Phussa who had arisen as a Buddha 92 aeons ago. While the Buddha was staying at the Veḷuvana Monastery in Rājagaha, Visākha the millionaire put his questions to Dhammadinnā. He himself was a Once-returner as had already been mentioned. Dhammadinnā was formerly Visākha’s wife, and yet, as she had later become a Buddhist nun (*bhikkhuni*),

he had to pay respects to her and treated her with reverence. He asked her a question about the personality (*sakkāya*), i.e., the body or self, or to put it another way, about the meaning of the personality. The answer the Dhammadinnā gave will be described later.

### Odd Behaviour after Attaining Non-returning

As said earlier, Visākha had become a Stream-winner along with King Bimbisāra at the same time. Thereafter, he made regular visits to the Blessed One and listened attentively to his discourses. It would appear that he must have been practising mindfulness whenever opportunity came in his way. One day, he became a Once-returned (*sakadāgāmi*). This weakened the two fetters of sensual desire (*kāmarāga*) and ill-will (*vyāpāda*). As these two types of defilements had not yet been totally eliminated at this stage, his behaviour towards his wife Dhammadinnā did not seem very odd or distinctive. One day, after some time, he reached the stage a Non-returned (*anāgāmi*), whereby he became fully liberated from these two fetters.

Having thus totally got rid of all sensual desire and ill-will, he was immune from pleasurable feelings, and exasperation, anger, disappointment, unpleasantness, unhappiness, disgust, distress and the like also became totally extinct in him. He was, therefore, in a state of ecstatic delight. What a rapturous feeling! As such, when Visākha returned home from the monastery, he looked serene, and bore the semblance of an ordained monk, calm and unperturbed without being distracted by his surroundings, similar to those meditators who are diligently practising mindfulness. The previous day being an Uposatha day it seems that he must have observed the Eight Precepts, spending the whole night at the monastery, and made his way back home early in the morning the next day.

His wife, Dhammadinnā, was eagerly awaiting and looking towards the road from where her spouse would come at the usual time. Formerly, Visākha also expected his wife to be at the window to which his eyes would automatically look up when approaching the house, and when their eyes met both of them greeted one another with a happy smile. However, on this day, Visākha did not look up at all, but kept his eyes on the road and walked slowly towards his house with serenity. Seeing him behave in this way, Dhammadinnā felt rather concerned and thought, "I wonder what troubles him?" As

usual, she came down from the upper storey to meet her husband and, expecting to go up the stairs together hand in hand, she reached out her hand to meet his. To her dismay, Visākha withdrew his hand and without greeting her as usual, he went upstairs alone in a highly composed manner. This strange attitude of her husband made her think that there must be some reason for it, but she said nothing, intending to ask him about it at the meal time.

Visākha usually enjoyed his meals chatting happily with his wife and commenting on the sweet and sour tastes of the delightful dishes served. When the meal time arrived he took the meals by himself with dignity, without even inviting his wife to join him. This calm behaviour at the meal table is something like meditators who take their food with mindfulness. Seeing him behave thus, Dhammadinnā became really anxious, but remain silent, hoping to know the reason in the evening. When night fell, Visākha refrained from entering the usual bed chamber meant for the couple, and instead retired for the night alone on a single bed. Finding Visākha sleeping the night alone made Dhammadinnā all the more unhappy. Yet she waited with patience for a two more days. On the third night, she could not tolerate it any longer and went into his bedroom and respectfully stood before him bowing her head with humility. Visākha then asked, “Dhammadinnā! What brings you here at this hour?” Dhammadinnā replied that she had to come to him because of his odd behaviour, which had changed dramatically, quite unlike his behaviour in the past. She then asked him directly whether he was seeking another wife. On being answered in the negative, she continued to ask him whether there was some sort of backbiting by someone against her. To this query he also replied that there was nothing of this kind. Then Dhammadinnā asserted she must have been guilty of some kind of fault. Visākha responded that she had no fault whatsoever.

Finally Dhammadinnā asked a direct question: “If that was so, why did you remain silent without even greeting me and speaking to me as you did before?”

Visākha was thus put in a dilemma. He reflected, “I must tell her everything that has happened. If I do not, she might even die because of her extreme mental suffering. The Dhamma that I have achieved should be kept secret, but the problem would be solved only if the truth of the matter is revealed.”



He explained gently as follows: “Dhammadinnā, I have attained the supramundane Dhamma that will determine my future destiny, after I have heard the Buddha’s discourse. On the first and second occasions when I realised the Dhamma, I was not yet completely free from feelings connected with sensual pleasures, and, therefore, at that time our marital relationship had not changed. Now on this third occasion, the Dhamma that I have gained is exceptional and remarkable. All sensual desires have totally ceased to exist in me. I, therefore, remained in solitude with utmost purification of mind and body. Do not take it amiss that there is any other reason for my present attitude. If you prefer you may keep all your wealth and riches and those belonging to me as well. I request you to stay with me in a brotherly and sisterly way from now onwards, and I shall content myself with whatever food you provide me with. Otherwise, you may take all of our wealth and go anywhere that you may wish. If you have no such wish, then you may stay here as before and I shall look after you as my own sister.”

Having heard these significant words, Dhammadinnā contemplated: “This sort of speech cannot possibly be uttered by an ordinary person. It must be true that Visākha has acquired the supramundane Dhamma.” Her skilful mental attitude was due to her excellent perfections (*pāramī*). Otherwise, she might have adopted a wrong attitude and said, “If you are so intent on severing our marriage ties, I will retaliate in the same way. Husbands are not hard to find.” If she had entertained such perverse thoughts, and acted unskillfully, it could have brought about grave disadvantages. However, Dhammadinnā was no ordinary person. She had had perfections, and pondered upon herself thus. Visākha has eradicated all sensual desires, which he used to indulge in with relish. Now he says that all his desires have died out. The Dhamma that he possesses is truly exceptional and remarkable. I would also like to accomplish that Dhamma.”

With these noble-minded thoughts, she asked, “My lord, is the Dhamma which you have gained attainable only by men, or is it within the reach of women too? Visākha replied, “Do not say so! Whether a man or a woman, if one has perfections if one practises the Dhamma with faith and zeal, this supramundane Dhamma can be achieved.” She, therefore, requested his permission to lead the life of a bhikkhunī. To this earnest request, Visākha expressed with delight, “Dhamma-

dinnā! How pleased I am to hear you say that. I wished for you to follow the path of morality, but I did not say so since I was not aware of your inner feelings. I gladly give my permission.” Immediately afterwards, Visākha called on King Bimbisāra in whose presence he remained standing paying homage. The king asked him why he had come at an unusual time. He replied that he would like to procure a golden palanquin (carrying couch used as a carriage) for his wife Dhammadinnā for her ceremonial going forth as a nun. He further sought for the king’s favour to clear the main road of the city for the procession. The privileges asked for were granted by the king.

### Dhammadinnā’s Going Forth

Visākha made preparations for the occasion. He let Dhammadinnā take a bath with scented water, dressed her in magnificent attire, and seated her in a golden palanquin attended by her relatives. Offerings of flowers and perfume were made on a grand scale befitting the occasion to send her off to the nunnery. Taking this grand ceremony as a precedent, the traditional ceremonies for the going forth of young postulants (*pabbajjā maṅgala*) are nowadays held in Burmese villages with great magnificence and generous hospitality. On arrival at the nunnery, Visākha requested that Dhammadinnā be given the going forth (*pabbajjā*).

The nuns asked him to forgive Dhammadinnā for any faults, assuming that Visākha had brought his wife due to some fault on her part. It was, of course, to seek pardon on her behalf. It seems that Dhammadinnā was then still young. The Buddha went to Rājagaha when he was thirty-six years old. As King Bimbisāra was said to be five years younger than the Buddha, he might have been about 31 years of age. Visākha and King Bimbisāra seemed to be of the same age. Such being the case, at that time it would appear that Dhammadinnā was not more than 31 years of age. When the Bhikkhuṇī Order was first established, five Rainy Seasons (*vassa*) had passed since the time of his Enlightenment, so the Buddha was about forty. So when Dhammadinnā went forth into the Order she could not have been much more than thirty-five. In those days at that age, she must have been youthful, healthy, and fit like young women of the present generation. That might be why the nuns thought that Dhammadinnā was being abandoned by her husband.

Hence, their request to the millionaire Visākha to forgive her. Visākha in reply said that his wife had committed no fault of any kind and that she wanted to go forth with faith (*saddhāya pabbajita*) in the Buddha's dispensation of her own free-will.

### Going Forth with Faith and Through Fear

It may be mentioned here that the expression "to go forth with faith in the Buddha's dispensation" is of great significance. A person can be prompted by either one of two motives to become a member of the Saṅgha in the Buddha's dispensation, through faith (*saddhā pabbajita*) or through fear (*bhaya pabbajita*). Entering the Saṅgha in order to avoid any kind of impending danger, liability, or distress, or to escape from a hard living and straitened circumstances falls within the category of going forth through fear. As for going forth with faith, if one practises the Dhamma, one can attain the Path and its Fruition. One who joins the Saṅgha and wears the robe wishing for liberation from the endless cycle of existences, and the suffering of the lower realms, should be regarded as one gone forth through faith. After becoming a monk or a nun, if one strives hard to attain proficiency in morality, concentration, and wisdom, it is to be regarded as the highest and noblest form of going forth.

There are a number who have entered the Saṅgha and have even attained Arahantship. Some, of course, enter the Saṅgha to gain perfections in the present existence, and having accumulated the required merits, will achieve the Path and its Fruition in a future existence. This is also going forth with faith, but of the second class. There are others who embrace the religious life because they believe that by virtue of the merits gained by strict observance of the rules of discipline in the present existence, they will be reborn as a fortunate human being or a celestial being. They are in the third class of those gone forth with faith. The Buddha advised not to allow oneself to descend to the lowest level of material inheritance (*āmisa*).

Since Dhammādinā entered the Bhikkhuṇī Order on the strength of her implicit faith with the aim of achieving supramundane Dhamma, her case should be regarded as going forth with faith of the highest order. This is why Visākha said that his wife was going forth with complete faith in the Buddha's dispensation. The Commentary goes on to describe how the going forth was performed.

### Mode of Conduct Towards Monastics

After Visākha had explained that Dhammadinnā was going forth through faith, an experienced Bhikkhuṇī gave her a meditation subject relevant to the occasion and proceeded to shave her head. When shaving the head, instructions should be given to the postulant to contemplate the repulsive nature of the hairs of the head, the hairs of the body, nails, teeth, and skin. This is known as “*taca pañcaka*”—the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) of the five body parts ending with fingernails (*taca*). When hairs drop, it should be contemplated that these are merely hairs, and do not constitute a self. There were cases where some postulants with the highest perfections attaining Arahantship through insight even while the head was being shaved.

Shaving of the head having been done, Dhammadinnā was now a novice nun (*sāmaṇeri*). After the ceremony was over, Visākha bid farewell saying, “Sister Dhammadinnā, may you find success and happiness in the religious life practising the Dhamma taught by the Buddha after gaining full realisation by his own effort.” Encouraging her thus, he paid homage and returned home.

As Dhammadinnā had been the wife of a multi-millionaire, many people visited her to pay homage. Close friends of her own class would come, as well as other women. Her relatives might also have visited her frequently. With a continuous flow of visitors, being preoccupied with receiving guests, it would seem that she had no chance to devote herself to meditation. She, therefore, pondered thus: “I have entered into Order to escape from the cycle of existence. Now I cannot find time to practise the Dhamma due to the time wasted receiving friends and acquaintances. I should retreat to a remote monastery where no-one will come.” Reflecting thus, she retired to a remote monastery with her preceptor, where she practised meditation earnestly. While thus practising meditation at a secluded monastery in a peaceful environment, with her excellent perfections in support, she reached Arahantship within a few days. At the same time she became fully equipped with analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*), four attainments peculiar to the great Arahants.

### Special Perfections of Dhammadinnā

Her extraordinary perfections were realised as fulfilment of her wish that she prayed for after offering alms to Venerable Sujāta Thera,

a leading disciple of [Padumuttara Buddha](#) who had appeared as an Enlightened One, one-hundred thousand aeons ago. Again, 92 aeons ago during the time of Phussa Buddha, Dhammadinnā became the wife of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who happened to be the future multi-millionaire Visākha. They jointly performed charitable deeds of great magnitude for the Saṅgha led by the Buddha.

During the time of Buddha Kassapa who was the third Buddha prior to Gotama Buddha in the present aeon, she became one of the seven daughters of [King Kiki](#), and at that time, for the whole life-span of twenty-thousand years, she led the holy life (*brahmacariya*). For these perfections of exceptional virtues, she attained Arahantship within two or three days. After her attainment of Arahantship when the practice of Dhamma was fully accomplished, Dhammadinnā reflected thus: “Only if I return to my own native place, my relatives and friends will have much more benefit and also the nuns who stay with me will be receive more gifts.” She then returned to the original nunnery at Rājagaha. Hearing the news of her return, Visākha went into wondered: “Why has she returned so soon! Dhammadinnā has come back in just a few days though it is said that she has went into retreat to practise meditation. Has she given up because she cannot find happiness in leading the life of a bhikkhuṇī?” Reflecting thus, he made his way to Dhammadinnā to make enquires. On his arrival at the monastery and after paying homage to Dhammadinnā, he asked her questions on the Dhamma. They were asked discreetly as by a man of erudition, because if he had asked her bluntly, “Are you unhappy in the holy life?” it would have been unwise.

## What is the Personality?

*“Sakkāyo sakkāyo’ti, ayye, vuccati. Katamo nu kho, ayye, sakkāyo utto Bhagavatā”ti?*

“Sister! It is called the personality (*sakkāya*). What kind of thing is the personality according to Buddha’s teachings?”

The prefix “*sa*” in the compound “*sakkāya*” conveys the sense of “own” or existence, or possession in reality;” “*kāya*” means the combination of mind and matter. Hence, “*sakkāya*” means the existing aggregate of mind and matter. If it is spoken of with reference to the notion of a wrong view, the clearly manifest aggregate of mind and

matter is wrongly conceived as a self or a being, and this erroneous concept is known as personality-view (*sakkāyaditṭhi*). If spoken of in terms of the Four Noble Truths, this aggregate of mind and matter called “personality,” is, in fact, the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-saccā*), because it is incessantly arising and passing away. The question asked by Visākha is meant to refer to this Truth of Suffering.

The question is highly philosophical, profound, and difficult to answer. A person may know the Dhamma but if he or she is not well versed in scriptures and is not fully accomplished with analytical knowledge, it will be extremely difficult to answer. Even if one is learned, but lacks practical experience and knowledge of the Dhamma, one will find it difficult to deal with this question. However, as Dhammānā was an Arahant endowed with the four kinds of analytical knowledge (knowledge of ethics, religious doctrines, grammatical comments and expositions, and supernormal discrimination) she could answer the question immediately.

### The Personality is the Five Aggregates

*“Pañca kho ime, āvuso Visākha, upādānakkhandhā sakkāyo vutto Bhagavatā, seyyathidaṃ — rūpupādānakkhandho, vedanupādānakkhandho, saññupādānakkhandho, saṅkhārupādānakkhandho, viññānupādānakkhandho. Ime kho, āvuso Visākha, pañcupādānakkhandhā sakkāyo vutto Bhagavatā”ti.*

“Friend (*āvuso*) Visākha! These five aggregates of attachment are the personality, is what the Buddha taught. Namely, the aggregate of matter (*rūpupādānakkhandho*), the aggregate of feeling (*vedanupādānakkhandho*), the aggregate of perception (*saññupādānakkhandho*), the aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhārupādānakkhandho*), and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññānupādānakkhandho*).

“Aggregate of attachment” is to be construed as the attachment to the sensations caused by mind and matter. All sensations and feelings arising from bodily contacts and mental formations at every moment of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, or knowing have the characteristic of impermanence. If the feelings or sensations that arise from contact with the sense-objects at the six sense-doors are not properly contemplated and appreciated as being mere phenomena, attachment occurs with a wrong view that they

are permanent, pleasant, and a living being. So the term "aggregate of attachment" is identified with mind and matter, which are prone to attachment. It is an assemblage of mind and matter which is subject to attachment. This is why Buddha taught us that the aggregates of attachment are identical to the personality.

Further, what constitutes the five aggregates of attachment is comprised of the form or physical body and a group of material elements as the object or cause of attachment. The second is the feelings forming a group of sensations which bring forth attachment, and the feelings that spring from the contact of the six senses-organs with their sense-objects. The third, is the aggregate of perceptions leading to attachment and springing from the contact of the six sense-organs with external objects. The fourth is the aggregate of mental formations arising from attachment, which brings about the performance of both wholesome and unwholesome actions. The fifth is consciousness that consists mainly of thoughts or mental impressions of various thoughts (mind-consciousness). Hence, according to the Buddha's teachings, these five aggregates of attachment are called the personality.

### Personality as Taught by the Buddha

The Buddha's teachings identifying the aggregates of attachment with the personality are found in the Sakkāya Sutta of the Saṃyuttanikāya (S.iii.158):

*"Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sakkāyo? Pañcupādānakkhandhātissa vacanīyaṃ. Katame pañca? Seyyathidaṃ — rūpupādānakkhandho, vedanupādānakkhandho, saññupādānakkhandho, saṅkhārupādānakkhandho, viññāṇupādānakkhandho. Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sakkāyo."*

Therefore, as taught by the Buddha, the answer should be that the personality implies the five aggregates of attachment. Mind and matter, which are clearly manifested by physical movements and feelings, and mental sensations (consciousness) that arise at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and thinking constitute the personality. If the psycho-physical phenomena of mind and matter is not known as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self by insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), then attachment arises, which

gives rise to a mistaken view that they are a permanent, pleasant and beautiful, and that they are a living being, a self, or an individual.

Thus, mind and matter which evidently exist, are called the aggregates of attachment. Attachment possesses the intrinsic characteristic of grasping or clinging. According to the expression given in this Sutta, it is in fact produced by craving, which conveys the meaning of passionate desire (*chandarāga*). In the teachings in the Suttanta Piṭaka, attachment which clings to the five aggregates is only described as passionate desire. However, according to the Abhidhamma, attachment is classified into four kinds:

1. Attachment to sensual pleasures (*kāmuṇapādāna*),
2. Attachment to views (*diṭṭhupādāna*),
3. Attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbatupādāna*) and
4. Attachment to the self (*attavādupādāna*).

Attachment to sensual pleasures is craving for desirable sense objects. This is equivalent to passionate desire.

Attachment to the self means clinging to the idea of a self (which is in fact just mind and matter), and as it clings to a self, ego, or a living being, it is a false view of reality (*diṭṭhi*).

Attachment to rites and rituals is clinging to a mistaken idea that by any practice that does not fall within the scope of the Noble Eightfold Path one can be liberated from all kinds of sufferings. To cite an example: that just by bathing in the waters of the Ganges all demerits can be purified, thereby gaining happiness; or just by remaining naked and fasting, all sufferings will be eradicated; or by worshipping Brahmā or God, suffering will be expunged; or merely by immersing oneself in thoughtful imaginations to deter evil or vicious thoughts from arising; or by just dispelling demeritorious thoughts with mental reflection; or just by letting the mind dwell on peace and tranquility, all kinds of misery can be exterminated.

In brief, it is the false belief that by resorting to any practices other than by developing mindfulness for the attainment of the Noble Path, that liberation from suffering falling within the wide scope of “*dukkha*” can be achieved. All these false beliefs, practices, rites and beliefs are to be regarded as attachment to rites and rituals.

Attachment to views means all kinds of wrong beliefs other than the two previously explained: beliefs that deny kamma and its effects, the belief that everything perishes after death, or that



an indestructible soul exists eternally. These are attachment to views.

Of the four kinds of attachment, the first is passionate desire, or craving. The remaining three are all wrong beliefs. Therefore, when desire or attachment occurs, it is caused by a combination of a craving and wrong view. Of these two, craving imbibes attachment with a wrong view. That is why in all discourses such as the Cūḷavedalla Sutta attachment to views is not treated separately; only passionate desire was mentioned as being fundamental. In this regard, however, if attachment to views were taken into consideration, the Sutta and Abhidhamma must be regarded as being in agreement.

### Clarification on How Attachment Occurs

At the moment of seeing, seeing occurs because of the eye-base and the visual object. Therefore, the eye as a material object is clearly in existence; so too is the visual object. The eye and the visual object are form or matter (*rūpa*). Then, awareness becomes conscious of whatever is seen through contact between the sense-organ and the object. Then, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings (*vedanā*) occur. When seeing occurs, a neutral sensation is most commonly felt. Taking cognizance of the object of sight is also evident. This is perception (*saññā*). Then, to complete the act of seeing, exertion will have to be made to perceive the object mentally with intention (*cetanā*) and attention (*manasikāra*). These are mental formations (*saṅkhārā*). Knowing the sense-object is mind-consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

All such phenomena, which occur in every act of seeing, constitute the five aggregates (*khandhā*), the physical and mental phenomena of existence. The following motto may be recited and committed to memory to know clearly the meaning of the five aggregates of attachment (*upādānakkhandhā*).

1. The eye and visual object at the moment of seeing are the material aggregate (*rūpupādānakkhandha*).
2. Feelings that arise from the seeing are the aggregate of feelings (*vedanupādānakkhandha*).
3. Recognising the object of sight is the aggregate of perceptions (*saññānupādānakkhandha*).
4. Paying attention with volition to complete the act of seeing is the aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhārupādānakkhandha*).

5. The occurrence of mind-consciousness is the aggregate of (*viññāṇupādānakkhandha*). The five material and mental aggregates that manifest at the moment of seeing are called the personality (*sakkāya*).

### Attachment with Craving and Wrong View

Ordinary people who do not practise insight meditation cling to pleasant sights with a pleasurable feeling when they see it. This amounts to attachment with craving (*taṇhā*). Attachment occurs thinking that “It is a woman,” or “It is a man.” This is attachment with a false view. Attachment occurs with delight and pleasure in having clear eyesight. This is also craving. Assuming oneself to be a person or a self is a wrong view. Seeing something good and pleasurable arouses attachment. If disagreeable things are seen, it invokes a desire longing to see something agreeable. This is also attachment with a false view. Feelings of attachment to what is seen also arises. Attachment also arises with a false notion that “It is I” who remembers it. There is also attachment to feelings that occur in the act of seeing as impelled by intention. Attachment to what is seen and known occurs thinking that “It is I” who sees or knows the object. It is because of such attachment in the way described above, mind and matter become manifest at the moment of seeing. They are, therefore, regarded as the aggregates of attachment.

Similarly, attachment occurs in the same way at the moment of hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. The five aggregates are also clearly manifested in all such cases. No elaboration is necessary. Among these five aggregates, tactile consciousness is the most pervasive. In every part of the body, wherever flesh and blood are present, there are sensitive areas, which can detect the feelings of touch. The element of touch pervades the entire body from head to toe, it is present in the skin, flesh, veins, *etc.* There is hardly any spot, not even the size of a pin-prick, that is free from this sense-base. Since the entire body is sensitive to touch, the sensation and tactile-consciousness arise whenever contact occurs. Sensual objects are always present, both inside and outside the body. The sense of touch is inherent in every part of the body, which comprises the four primary elements of earth (*paṭhavi*), which has the characteristic of softness or hardness, water (*āpo*), which has the characteristic of

cohesion, fire (*tejo*), which has the characteristic of temperature, and air (*vāyo*), which has the characteristic of movement or pressure. They are the physical elements of the body, which feels every contact. The body and the tactile sense-base are material aggregate of attachment, which is so called because it incites attachment.

### Attachment Eliminated by Practising Meditation

If the characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self are truly comprehended by contemplating the sensation of touch at every moment of its occurrence, attachment will have no chance to occur, and will be eliminated or avoided. Again, if attachment ceases, then becoming (*bhava*), the resultant of merits and demerits, which come into existence through desirable attachment, will not occur, and no new existence comprising mind and matter will come into being as a result of kamma. The miseries and sufferings of old age and death will also be avoided. This is how all kinds of misery and suffering of existence arising from defilements can be eradicated by the removal of wrong views and mental defilements by gaining insight. To avoid all miseries, anxiety, and troubles, insight meditation should be practised.

This method of meditation is taught in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta wherein instructions such as “When walking one knows, ‘I am walking’ (*gacchanto vā Gacchamī’ti pajānāti*),” and when standing, sitting, or lying down, one knows it as “standing,” “sitting,” or “lying down,” as the case may be. Next, any physical behaviour or bodily movements, should be clearly noted as they occur. This is the instruction to contemplate and note the sense of touch occurring in the physical body, when walking. Therefore, if it is contemplated and noted as ‘walking,’ ‘standing,’ ‘sitting,’ ‘lying,’ ‘bending,’ ‘stretching,’ ‘shaking,’ ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ (of the abdomen), ‘touching,’ and so on, the five aggregates of attachment, which are involved in the act of knowing the sense of touch, will be realised as mere mind and matter. It will also be known as causes and effects arising and disappearing continually. It is also appreciated as impermanent because it arises and vanishes immediately. This will lead to the knowledge that it is not-self or without individuality, over which there is absolutely no control. This is how the aggregates of attachment, which is also called the personality is known as it truly is. The

personality, which is synonymous with the aggregates of attachment, is, in fact, the Truth of Suffering. As such, knowing it fulfils the task of knowing the Truth of Suffering as it really is. This is realising or perceiving it in an analytical way (*dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*) in accordance with the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.

I give these instructions for practising insight meditation so that you may know the meaning of the aggregates of attachment, the personality, or the Truth of Suffering. At first, it is impossible to be mindful of all phenomena that arise at the six sense-doors. That is why we first instruct you to contemplate the more obvious sense of touch. Contemplate the rising and falling of the abdomen while sitting to learn to note with ease the sensation of touch as it occurs, and to develop concentration quickly. While contemplating the rising and falling movements, if thoughts or imaginations appear, note them as “thinking,” or “imagining.” If pleasant or unpleasant sensations occur, note them. If you must change your posture, note all of the movements without missing any. If hearing or seeing occurs, note it as “hearing,” or “seeing.” When any odour is smelt, note it as “smelling, smelling.” When tasting, note it as “tasting.”

In all such cases and in the process of imagining things, the five aggregates of attachment come into play. Instructions are therefore given to contemplate each physical or mental phenomenon as it arises when mindfulness and concentration become deeper and stronger. If such instructions are respectfully followed, the true nature of mind and matter is truly comprehended as suffering, because it is incessantly arising and passing away. This knowledge is realising the Truth of Suffering. Likewise, in the act of thinking with awareness, or hearing, seeing, smelling, and tasting, the personality is clearly realised as mere suffering and misery, according to reality. This is also the Truth of Suffering. Visākha asked Dhammadinnā to explain the meaning of the Truth of Suffering, but he employed the term “personality” instead. Dhammadinnā too, purposely gave her answer that the personality in fact means the five aggregates of attachment, intentionally referring to the Truth of Suffering.

### Aggregates and Aggregates of Attachment

There are two kinds of aggregates (*khandhā*). One that attracts attachment (*upādāna*); and the other that is not the object of attraction,

or which does not incite any attachment. The latter kind of aggregate is nothing but the Noble Path and its Fruition, which embraces the four mental aggregates (*nāma-khandhā*). Craving and wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) cannot by any means dwell on the Noble Path for the destruction of human passion, and its Fruition, and no clinging to these can occur. Since this is so, these supramundane aggregates, transcendent conditions of the Path and its Fruition, cannot be called aggregates of attachment. Neither can they be regarded as the Truth of Suffering, nor as personality. For these reasons, Dhammadinnā gave her answer to Visākha that the Buddha had taught that the five aggregates of attachment are personality.

### What is the Origin of Personality?

Visākha being elated and highly satisfied with the answer given by Dhammadinnā relating to personality, expressed his approval: “Sister! Well said (*sādhū!*)” He then proceeded to put another question on the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya saccā*):

*“Sakkāyasamudayo sakkāyasamudayo’ti, ayye, vuccati. Katamo nu kho, ayye, sakkāyasamudayo vutto Bhagavatā”ti?*

The meaning of the above question is: “Sister! What is the origin of the personality? To put it another way, what is the cause of suffering, which is identified with the personality, the aggregate of mind and matter?”

### Craving is the Origin of Personality

Dhammadinnā gave the following answer:

*“Yayaṃ āvaso visākha taṇhā ponobhavika nandirāgasahagatā tatra tatrā bhīnandini; seyyathidaṃ kamataṇhā bhavataṇhā vibhavataṇhā, āyaṃ kho āvuso visākha sakkāyasamudaya vutto bhagavatā.”*

It means: “Friend Visākha! Craving is hunger which causes renewed existence. It is accompanied by craving for sensual pleasures in any form of existence with pleasurable delight. This is the origin of the personality as taught by the Blessed One.”

Craving takes delight anywhere in the world of existence, supplying the binding force to trap sentient beings in the cycle of existence. The Buddha has taught us that this craving is the

fundamental cause of suffering called personality. In brief, it may be understood that this craving, which takes delight in its thirst for the gratification of passions in continued existences, is the real origin of suffering, which is equivalent to the mental and physical aggregates called the personality, a being, or a self.

The Pāḷi word “*taṇhā*” means “hunger” or “thirst.” When one is afflicted with hunger, the desire to take food becomes keen. Delight or affection is also a kind of thirst. One wishes to fulfil unsatisfied longings, desires, and wishes. Desires and wishes are craving. Men are not content with just having a glance at an agreeable sight or scene. They want to see them repeatedly. They want to feel the delight of sights. In much the same way, desire arises repeatedly wishing to listen to sounds, to smell fragrances, to taste flavours, to enjoy the sense of touch, and to reflect on enjoyable and pleasurable things relating to what has been seen, heard, smelt, tasted, touched, and thought of or imagined, respectively. The desire that springs up with such tendencies has the nature of thirst or hunger. Wishing to possess the eye and the faculty of seeing as a permanent feature is passionate desire, and because of this attachment new existences will invariably occur repeatedly. This describes the arising of aggregates of attachment concerning the act of seeing. The same thing happens with regard to the ear and the act of hearing; the nose and the act of smelling; the tongue and the act of tasting; the body and the sense of touch. These actions are the cause of rebirth which consequently brings forth successive new existences along with the related aggregates of attachment.

Because they are hungry for such pleasurable and agreeable feelings, some do not have a liking for the Brahmā realms, which are devoid of pleasurable sense of smell, taste, and touch. A Brahmā is free from sensual desire (*kāmarāga*). Some might even regard it as a miserable existence without having anything to smell, taste, or touch. It is like someone who is fond of smoking who does not wish to stay in a place where smoking is prohibited. So too, a person who enjoys chewing betel does not want to stay where betel is not available. An alcoholic is not willing to live in a place where he is required to abstain from drinking liquor. In the same way, sentient beings finding enjoyment in pleasurable sights perceived through the eye and agreeable sounds heard through the ear, are not inclined

to seek for nibbāna, which is free from such sensual pleasures and defiling passions. Such beings are a vast majority. This is inevitable because of the thirst for enjoyment in the mental and physical aggregates. Because of this craving, which hungers for pleasures with delight, passionate desire persists. At the last conscious moment before death, either the resultant of the causes generated in the past (*kamma*), a sign associated with good or evil actions done in one's life time (*kamma-nimitta*), or a sign of one's destiny (*gati-nimitta*), appear at the mind's door in the form of vision. When death consciousness (*cuti citta*) ceases, death occurs and a new existence begins instantaneously. Further renewed existences will follow in succession. The formation of becoming (*bhava*), which as the karmic agent of rebirth, is nothing but the revival or recurrence of the elements of mind and matter, known as the personality.

Since craving is instrumental in causing new existences, it is described as leading to rebirth (*ponobhavika*). It is the natural characteristic of craving to cling to enjoyment and pleasure of life in any kind of existence. Those in the world of human beings find inner pleasure and happiness in themselves, and externally in personal belongings and their friends, attendants, and surroundings. Irrespective of whether they are rich or poor, they are happy to live in the places where they are born and brought up no matter what the circumstances may be. So, there is no need to comment on those who are enjoying life in the celestial abodes. Even animals are happy in their own surroundings and circumstances under which they are born and living. It is the same for cattle and horses that sustain their lives by eating grass, leaves, and plants. They enjoy their low existence. The same condition prevails among pigs, fowl, and birds that feed on loathsome garbage or insects, and yet they live in delight. That is why they are reborn in such existences repeatedly. The answer given went on to lucidly explain the three types of craving.

### Three Types of Craving

The first is the craving for sensual pleasures (*kāmatanḥā*). The second is craving for existence (*bhavatanḥā*), thinking that it is eternal (the view of eternalism). The third is the craving for non-existence (*vibhavatanḥā*), assuming that everything passes into oblivion after death (the view of nihilism).

## Craving for Sensual Pleasures

Of the three types of craving, craving for sensual pleasures means attachment to or craving for desirable sense-objects, whether it emanates from one's own body or from another's, or from property, goods, or articles for personal use or consumption. On seeing a beautiful sight, if attachment arises, it is the work of craving for sensual pleasures. When one speaks of a beautiful sight, it embraces meanings that include the whole body of a man or a woman, and garments that he or she is wearing. In the same way, the desire to acquire or cling to all paraphernalia together with the individual's, pleasing voice, fragrant smell, agreeable taste, those who prepare the food, pleasurable contacts, and all goods for personal use, is also to be regarded as craving for sensual pleasures. The wish to be a human being, a deva, a male or a female, to enjoy sensual pleasures as human or celestial beings, is also craving for sensual pleasures.

Pleasurable feelings arise if one considers the sight to be agreeable, or if one likes the sound, odour, taste, or touch. This conception of agreeability in all sense-contacts is ignorance (*avijjā*) or delusion (*moha*). Ignorance clouds all right understanding, obscuring the true nature of mind and matter, causing the emergence of an erroneous view. Because ignorance conceals the truth, impermanence is wrongly perceived as permanence. The disagreeable or unsatisfactory nature of the psycho-physical phenomena arising and passing away incessantly, though in fact it is unsatisfactory, it is wrongly conceived as something enjoyable and pleasant. Ceaseless arising and dissolution of psycho-physical phenomena which reveals not-self (*anatta*), is conceived as self (*atta*) or ego. The disgraceful or detestable body is conceived as full of grace and charm. The assumption of such a misconception that all sense objects are agreeable and pleasurable incites craving for sensual pleasures. The passionate nature of this desire creates powerful attachments, and when attachment arises, actions follow to fulfil one's personal desires, which leads to both demerits (*akusala kamma*), and merits (*kusala kamma*). This volitional force causes rebirth in a new existence comprising mind and matter. It is the resultant effect of kamma. That is why every time craving for sensual pleasures occurs, it must be construed as the willing acceptance of the new existences comprising mind and matter which is identified with the personality. The impetus of this craving is the



driving force that causes consciousness of the accumulation of merits and demerits (*abhisankhāra viññāṇa*) to cling firmly to the sensations arising from *kamma*, *kamma-nimitta*, and *gati-nimitta*, the mental visions appearing on the verge of death. Then the mental state known as decease-consciousness (*cuti citta*) arises and passes away, and this conditions a fresh consciousness in another birth beginning the next existence instantaneously without any interval after the dissolution of the previous existence. Therefore, craving for sensual pleasures is explained as leading to rebirth (*ponobhavika*).

### Craving for Existence

The Commentaries mention that craving for existence (*bhavataṇhā*) is craving that arises in conjunction with the belief that a living being is eternal. It means the belief in eternalism (*sassatadiṭṭhi*). According to this wrong view, the living soul or self (*atta*), is in a perpetual state of existence and is imperishable. Though the gross physical body may be destroyed, the spirit or soul remains immortal and will continue to reside in a new body. Even if the world is destroyed, the soul will be everlasting. Craving for existence also delights in the self as a permanent entity. The wrong notion is that “I existed in the past and am presently enjoying pleasures, expecting to find the same enjoyment in the future.” Believing and expecting as such, it clings to and craves for all feelings derived from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing as well as from other manifold sensual pleasures, which are thought to be obtainable in the future. A person who holds this view wishes to become prosperous and happy in the present life and in the hereafter. In future he or she wishes to be born into the pleasurable existences of human or celestial beings. Some wish to be male in every existence while some only want to be reborn female. These are all craving for existence. Every time feelings of attachment and desire arise as prompted by the desire for existence, it would amount to receiving support for the recurrence of a new existence. As such, this kind of craving is quoted as leading to rebirth (*ponobhavika*).

### Craving for Non-existence

The term “*vibhava*” prefixed to the word “*taṇhā*” means the absence or cessation of existence. Therefore, the craving that occurs

on the view that the self or a living being only exists before death and becomes totally extinct after death, is called craving for non-existence (*vibhavataṇhā*). It is the craving that appears conjoined with nihilism (*ucchedatitṭhi*). This means the belief that nothing remains after the death of a being whose existence is completely annihilated and severed. One who holds this view wishes to make the most of the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of life while he or she is still alive and before death occurs. He or she takes delight in indulgence in worldly pleasures, to which he or she clings. He or she also wishes to escape death. These are also craving for non-existence. If great suffering arises, he or she thinks that it would be better to die. This is also craving for non-existence. Every time it appears, it will be an influential factor in inciting attachment to the sensations that crop up on the threshold of death. Hence, having had an attachment to one of the sensations occurring on the eve of death, relinking-consciousness (*paṭisandhi citta*) arises almost simultaneously and then he or she begins a new existence comprising mind and matter. It has therefore been stated that this craving is also known as leading to rebirth (*ponobhavika*).

The nihilistic view that everything passes into oblivion with the annihilation of existence after death is the result of craving. Because of the acceptance of this view it is believed that after expiry of the present life-term, nothing remains to experience the good or bad results of one's own actions. Therefore, one who holds this view, also tends not to avoid vices and demeritorious deeds (*akusala kamma*). Neither will he or she be inclined to perform meritorious deeds (*kusala kamma*). His or her entire attention is devoted to finding various ways and means to search for pleasures and to possess and enjoy the delights of life. For a person who accepts the nihilistic view of (*ucchedatitṭhi*) (i.e. that death is the annihilation of existence), there is hardly any good kamma to cause rebirth in a noble or worthy existence. However, unwholesome kamma is likely to be in abundance. Therefore, getting attached to one of the three death signs (*kamma, kamma-nimitta, or gati-nimitta*) that will appear on the verge of death, it is probable that he or she will, under the circumstances then prevailing, be driven to the mental state of rebirth consciousness that will drag him or her down to the lower realms (*apāya*).

Because of these three kinds of craving, in any form of existence beginning from the moment of conception, the formation of the aggregates of attachment occurs continuously, and for this reason, the three types of craving are deemed to be the real cause of the arising of personality. Then addressing Visākha, Dhammadinnā summarised on the arising of personality as taught by the Buddha in the following way: “According to what the Buddha has taught these three types of craving are known as the truth of the origin of suffering, the cause of personality. (A more detailed explanation on this can be found in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.)

Having heard the answer to his question on the Truth of the Origin of Suffering, Visākha expressed his in great satisfaction by saying “*Sādhu!*” and proceeded to ask about the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha saccā*), as follows.

### What Is the Cessation of Personality?

*“Sakkāyanirodho sakkāyanirodho’ti, ayye, vuccati. Katamo nu kho, ayye, sakkāyanirodho vutto Bhagavatā”ti?*

The question is: “What brings about the cessation of personality? Or, what is the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha saccā*)?” Dhammadinnā answered the above question as follows:

### Cessation of Craving Is the Cessation of Personality

*“Yo kho, āvuso Visākha, tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganīrodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo; ayaṃ kho, āvuso Visākha, sakkāyanirodho vutto Bhagavatā”ti.”*

“Friend Visākha! The complete cessation of craving, its relinquishment, and freedom from it brings about the cessation of personality, which is the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.”

It is profound and very hard to comprehend nibbāna, which is the Truth of the cessation of Suffering. It is also difficult to explain. It cannot be easily understood as in the case of mind and matter. Therefore, coming straight to the point, the cessation of personality may be explained as the total cessation and extinction of mind and matter, which are the aggregates of attachment. However, this does not mean the cessation of the arising and dissolution of mind and matter. It only

conveys the meaning that the usual arising phenomena of mind and matter cease to occur because of the absence of the cause for such occurrence. This is why mention is made here of the extinction of the origin of craving, which is the real cause of suffering. In this regard, the entire cessation of craving or passionate desire, is the effect of Arahantship, where there is no chance for occurrence thereby bringing with it the benefits of the annihilation of human passions and full liberation.

The complete absence of sensual desires and pleasurable attachment in the personality of an Arahant bears testimony to this fact. An Arahant is a holy person in whom human passions and worldly pleasures have become extinct. Therefore at the last moment of consciousness that arises on the eve of an Arahant's death, called *parinibbāna*, he or she is totally free from attachment to any kind of sensation, and being free from attachment, after death consciousness has ceased, rebirth consciousness along with new existence comprising mind and matter will not arise at all. Then, there is no more rebirth, and with the cessation of all existence, the Arahant is released forever from the sufferings of old age, sickness, and death. This is how the mental and physical aggregates, otherwise known as the Truth of Suffering or the personality, is annihilated. The cessation of all defiling passions brings an end to all kinds of suffering is what is meant by the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. It resembles a candle-flame that is extinguished as the wick has been burnt up. This was expounded in the Aṅguttaranikāya (A.i.177) as follows:

### Dependent Origination in Reverse Order

*“Katamañca, bhikkhave, dukkhanirodham ariyasaccaṃ? Avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññānanirodho, viññānanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā salāyatananirodho, salāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho, taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparideva-dukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, dukkhanirodham ariyasaccaṃ.”*

“Monks! What is meant by the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? Craving (*taṇhā*) or passionate desire arises dependent on ignorance (of the Four Noble Truths) and the complete cessation of ignorance leads to the cessation of mental formations, *i.e.* those mental states that lead to the performance of both wholesome and unwholesome actions (*saṅkhārā*).

The cessation of mental formations (*saṅkhāranirodhā*) leads to the cessation of rebirth consciousness (*viññāṇanirodho*).

The cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇanirodhā*) brings about the cessation of mind and matter (*nāmarūpanirodho*), the aggregates of a being.

The cessation of mind and matter (*nāmarūpanirodhā*) leads to the cessation of the six senses (*saḷāyatananirodho*) — the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Because of the cessation of the six senses (*saḷāyatananirodhā*), the complete cessation of contact (*phassanirodho*) comes about.

The cessation of contact (*phassanirodhā*) leads to the cessation of feeling (*vedanānirodho*).

The cessation of feeling (*vedanānirodhā*) leads to the cessation of craving (*taṇhānirodho*).

The cessation of craving (*taṇhānirodhā*) leads to the cessation of attachment (*upādānanirodho*).

Because of the cessation of this attachment (*upādānanirodhā*), the cause for renewed existence ceases and this brings about the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodho*).

The cessation of existence (*bhavanirodhā*) means no more rebirth (*jātinirodho*), thereby bringing an end to new existences. Due to the cessation of rebirth (*jātinirodhā*), aging (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇaṃ*), grief (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), sorrow (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyāsa*) come to an end (*nirujjhanti*). Thus, this entire aggregate of suffering ceases (*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti*).<sup>1</sup> This (*Idaṃ*), monks (*bhikkhave*), is called (*vuccati*) the Noble Truth (*ariyasaccaṃ*) of the cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodhaṃ*).

The above is the word-for-word translation of the Pāḷi as taught by the Buddha. In the Pāḷi text referred to, the respective cessation is shown in sequence showing that because of the cessation of wholesome and unwholesome actions (*saṅkhārā*), consciousness

<sup>1</sup> However, this does not mean the cessation of the self (*atta*).

(*viññāṇa*) ceases. Each step of cessation has been explained to give a clear understanding that if the cause ceases, the effect must also cease. The key point is that the moment ignorance ceases, all of the consequent effects cease simultaneously. Particular attention should be given to the fact that because of the cessation of the cause (*nirodhā*), the cessation of the effect (*nirodho*) is complete and absolute.

This is the exact translation. Therefore, the accurate meaning of nibbāna and the truth of cessation should be clearly understood as the law of cause (defiling passions) and effect (mind and matter). The entire truth of cessation (*nirodhasaccā*), which is nibbāna, is equivalent to the absolute cessation of craving and passionate desire for pleasure, as clarified in the Pāli text just quoted, and is also as cited in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. It should be understood that if the cause (mental defilements) is totally eliminated, the effect (of suffering), connected to the existence of mind and matter, entirely ceases. This amounts to the cessation of craving. It may be likened to the case of an oil lamp in which the flame is extinguished when the oil is totally exhausted.

How nibbāna is realised by the Noble Path is described in the Paṭisambhidāmagga (Pts.ii.237) as follows:

*‘Pañcannaṃ khandhānaṃ nirodho niccaṃ nibbānanti passanto sammattaniyāmaṃ okkamati.’*

Primarily, what is meant by this is that the cessation of the five mental and physical aggregates, such as seeing sights, hearing sounds, etc., is perceived during a brief moment at the attainment of the Noble Path while practicing insight meditation. Realising through the Path and Fruition of Arahantship is only for a moment when awareness arises momentarily of the cessation of the arising and passing away of mind and matter. This cessation is known as the fruit of the holy life (*sāmañña phala*), which is the object of consciousness of Path and Fruition consciousness (*magga-phala citta*). Then, because of the faculty of this Noble Path, which sees nibbāna, mental defilements (the cause) and mind and matter (the effect) cease, leaving no chance for recurrence. This cessation is nibbāna, which is excellent and distinctive (*visesa*). The distinctive nature of nibbāna gained through the faculty of the Four Noble Paths consists of four stages in the cessation of defilements and the aggregates.

The first of these four stages is the path of Stream-winning (*sotāpatti-magga*). One who reaches this state of holiness will be free from coarse craving that binds one to the sensual realms, and by virtue of this attribute will not only escape from the lower realms, but will only have to go through seven existences at the most before attaining final liberation. In particular, a Stream-winner has removed the three fetters of self-view (*sakkāyaditṭhi*), sceptical doubt about the Dhamma and the practice of morality (*vicikicchā*), and belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies. He or she cannot be reborn more than seven times in the human realm, and eventually after the last or seventh existence, will attain final cessation (*parinibbāna*).

With the attainment of deeper insight by means of the Path of Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-magga*), one gets rid of the coarser types of sensual desire (*kāmatanḥā*) and ill-will (*vyāpāda*). One will then have only two more existences at the most. It may be stated that at the brief moment of achieving the Path, one cannot possibly observe the actual cessation of defilements or mind and matter, because their presence is not conspicuous though they are capable of occurring. They just exist having the chance only to occur. Therefore, they are not perceived as vanishing in the shape of manifested things or elements. Only the realisation of nibbāna, the cessation of mind and matter is obviously gained at the brief moment of the Noble Path.

The attainment of the Path of Non-returning (*anāgāmi-magga*), the third of the four stages, completely destroys sensual desire and ill-will. As a Non-returner has overcome all desires, resentment, envy, jealousy, and hatred, no opportunity for fresh existences in the sensual realms could occur before he or she reaches the ultimate goal. However, how the destruction of defilements and mind and matter relating to becoming occur, is not actually perceived or realised at the fleeting moment of attaining the Path. In that extremely brief moment, he or she can only see nibbāna, which implies the complete cessation of the mental and physical process that is ordinarily disclosed by insight knowledge. Only when one reflects on the attainment of the Path and Fruition, will one come to know that all sensual desires, including its most subtle forms, and all animosity have died out. This purity allows one to remain in a tranquil state of mind, assured that one has escaped from all becoming in sensual realms.

The Path of Arahantship (*arahattamagga*) purges all kinds of defilements such as ignorance, craving for existence, *etc.*, and in the absence of attachment to existence, there is no chance for it to continue. This will not, however, be noticed at the brief moment of achieving the Path. Only nibbāna, which means the cessation of the arising and dissolution of mind and matter, as is usually found and noticed through insight knowledge, is noted and observed in a flash at the moment of the Path. As the cessation of defilements and the extinction of new existences has its own distinctiveness, falls within the scope of nibbāna, it may be stated that there is one and only nibbāna. What is meant by this is that the cessation of defilements with the aggregates remaining (*sa-upādisenanibbāna*), and the final cessation of existence (*anupādisesanibbāna*) are said to be the same as the fruit of the holy life (*sāmañña phala*) to which the Path and Fruition leans as its object. It is so named because of the similarity in the nature of cessation. The entire cessation of renewed existence brought about by the eradication of craving is to be regarded as the cessation of the personality. This means the total extinction of existence forever.

### What is the Truth of the Path?

Being satisfied with the answer given by Dhammadinnā in reply to the question on the truth of cessation, Visākha showed his appreciation by saying “*sādhu,*” and proceeded to ask as follows:

Q “*Sakkāyanirodhagāmini paṭipadā sakkāyanirodhagāmini paṭipadā’ti, ayye, vuccati. Katamā nu kho, ayye, sakkāyanirodhagāmini paṭipadā vuttā Bhagavatā’ti?*” — “Sister! What kind of practice will bring about the cessation of personality?” Or, in other words, “What kind of practice is this truth of the path that will lead to the cessation of personality as taught by the Buddha?”

It means, the practice of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering can lead one to nibbāna, *i.e.*, the cessation of personality, if it is dwelt upon with consciousness, and by being able to achieve the cessation of personality, one who practises meditation may realise nibbāna.

### The Truth of the Path

A “*Ayameva kho, āvuso Visākha, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo sakkāyanirodhagāmini paṭipadā vuttā Bhagavatā, seyyathidaṃ* —



*sammādiṭṭhi sammāsaṅkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammāājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati sammāsamādhi*”ti. —  
 “Friend Visākha! The Buddha has taught us the Noble Eightfold Path as the Path leading to the extinction of personality.”

This Noble Eightfold Path is well known and those who are interested in Dhamma may be able to learn it by heart. These are:

1. Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*),
2. Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*),
3. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*),
4. Right Action (*sammā-kammantā*),
5. Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*),
6. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyama*),
7. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*),
8. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

The Commentaries analyse right view into five categories. Some add right view regarding the knowledge gained by reflection after reaching the Noble Path (*paccavekkhaṇa-sammādiṭṭhi*), and that which arises as a fruit of the Noble Path (*phala-sammādiṭṭhi*), for both of which no separate effort is required to contemplate. The remaining four must be practised separately. Of these four, right view regarding the ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*), i.e., the right view that wholesome actions will be rewarded with merits while unwholesome actions will bring demerits. Unlike insight and Path knowledge, this need not be personally realised, but can be acquired by gaining confidence in the Dhamma. It is wisdom acquired by learning (*sutamayā-paññā*). However, this knowledge is very important too because only when the law of kamma or moral causation is well appreciated, can immoral deeds be avoided. Only if immorality is avoided can virtuous moral conduct be maintained.

If one wishes to practise tranquillity meditation one must have complete faith that by practising it one can reach the Brahmā world after gaining absorption (*jhāna*). Only then will one be able to reap the benefits after practising meditation. In the same way, only if one is confident that one can gain insight by contemplating mind and matter will one achieve insight and Path knowledge after practising insight meditation. So right view is the primary factor in the practice of insight meditation. Similarly, the path factors of morality and concentration are fundamental requirements for meditation.

A person who wants to practise insight meditation should be well equipped with right view and morality. He or she should strive hard to develop concentration. In this regard, to fully observe morality or to have purification of conduct, one should conform to the morality factors of the eightfold path: Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammantā*), and Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).

Right Speech means to refrain from telling lies (*musāvāda*), to refrain from backbiting (*pisuṇavācā*), to refrain from using abusive or harsh speech (*pharusavācā*), and to refrain from frivolous talk (*samphappolāpa*).

Right Action includes abstaining from killing living things (*pāṇātipātā*), abstaining from taking what is not given (*adinnādānā*), and abstaining from sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācārā*).

Right Livelihood means abstaining from wrong livelihood: stealing, cheating, killing, *etc.*, and includes immoral or illegal ways of earning a living. Lay persons purify their conduct by respectfully maintaining the five precepts (*pañca sīla*). Monks are required to fully observe the Pāṭimokkha precepts contained in the Vinaya.

To fulfil the path factors of concentration, the best thing would be to meditate to achieve the four absorptions (*jhāna*). If such absorptions cannot be attained, mind and matter may be contemplated for the development of momentary concentration of insight (*vīpassanā khaṇika samādhī*). That means to contemplate and note all mental and physical phenomena arising at the six senses. At first, when mindfulness and concentration are still weak, it will not be possible to note each and every occurrence in the act of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing in serial order. So, at first, one must contemplate one of the clearly manifest physical elements. Instructions in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta say to note while walking as “walking,” or when standing, sitting, or lying down, to note as “standing,” “sitting,” or “lying down” as appropriate.

Based on these instructions, we instruct meditators to note as “sitting” and “touching” while sitting, and to note the movements of the abdomen as “rising” and “falling.” Instructions are also given to contemplate and note any thoughts that may arise while noting the abdominal movements, to note feelings of stiffness or heat, and every bodily movement as it occurs, and to note “walking,” while walking. Those who respectfully comply with these guidelines, will

be able to distinguish between the object that is known and the knowing mind when momentary concentration has gained strength.

Because of the intention to move, which is the cause, movements of the limbs occur, which is the effect. This will be clearly noticed by one's own personal experience. Every time one contemplates, the realisation occurs that both the matter that is known and the knowing mind are arising and disappearing. After that they will be realised as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. Awareness of the truth in this way is right view of insight (*vipassanā sammādiṭṭhi*). The effort to focus the mind on the nature of reality to gain this Right View, is Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*). So, every time contemplation is done, right view and right thought come into play. This is how the two path factors of wisdom (*paññā maggaṅga*) occur. The way that Bodhisattas contemplate the arising and dissolution of the aggregates of attachment to attain Buddhahood is the same. The effort made at every moment of contemplation is Right Effort (*sammā-vāyama*). To be able to note with mindfulness the true nature of the occurrences, is the path factor of Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and to keep the mind fixed on the objects contemplated is Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Thus, every time contemplation occurs, these three path factors of concentration (*samādhi maggaṅga*) are involved.

In the Commentary, these three, plus the two factors of wisdom, are together known as the five workers (*kāraka maggaṅga*). If a piece of work is to be performed by a group of five persons, it will be accomplished only if all five work together in harmony. In the same way, when practising insight meditation, progress can be made in gaining concentration and insight only if these five factors function in unity. The three path factors of the morality group were fulfilled at the time of undertaking the precepts. Morality is preserved when contemplating, and becomes even more refined during the process of contemplation. So all eight factors of the path are functioning together at every moment of contemplation.

These are the factors of the preliminary path (*pubbabhāga magga*). They may be regarded as the forerunners of the Noble Path. Out of the five or six kinds of right view mentioned earlier, right view of absorption (*jhāna sammādiṭṭhi*) is the knowledge that occurs in conjunction with concentration. It is the supernormal knowledge of former existences (*pubbenivāsa abhiññā*). As regards the divine eye

(*dibbacakkhu*) that can see the death and rebirth of beings in different realms of existence, it would be a factor that encourages the practice of insight. The other special powers that are gained through absorption are hardly relevant to insight. Absorption is only the foundation of insight (*vipassanā pādaka jhāna*). Therefore, the three types of higher knowledge may be regarded as the basic path factors for insight. One who has achieved absorption should develop insight by relying mainly on the basic path factors. One who has not achieved absorption should develop insight by relying on the momentary concentration. When insight has developed up to the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations (*sañkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) the Noble Path will be gained subsequently leading to the attainment of nibbāna.

The path factors for insight should be developed by contemplating the arising of mind and matter based upon the fundamental path factors. When insight gains enough maturity by the development of the preliminary path, Stream-winning will be realised, and one will break through to catch the first glimpse of nibbāna. If one perseveres in earnest, this could be personally experienced. This realisation of insight is mentioned in the Paṭisambhidāmagga (Pts.ii.237).

### How Nibbāna Is Realised by the Noble Path

*“Pañcakkhandhe aniccatō passanto anulomikaṃ khantiṃ paṭilabhati.  
Pañcannaṃ khandhānaṃ nirodho niccaṃ nibbānanti passanto  
sammattaniyāmaṃ okkamati.”*

In brief, this means that by contemplating mental and physical aggregates and knowing them as impermanent, and by gaining knowledge of adaptation, one reaches a stage where the cessation of existence is seen as an eternal feature from the viewpoint of nibbāna.

This realisation is to be understood as the achievement of the Noble Path. In the same way, it has been shown that by contemplating with mindfulness the unsatisfactoriness of mind and matter, realisation comes of the blissful state of nibbāna where the complete cessation of existence is occurs with the attainment of the Noble Path. Moreover, having realised the true nature of mind and matter as being not-self the entire cessation of mind and matter is looked upon as an absolute reality and the noblest as found in nibbāna. This is

how the Noble Path, which sees nibbāna, is attained. It is entirely in agreement with what was stated in the Milinda Pañhā (Miln.235).

## How Nibbāna Is Realised

*“Tassa taṃ cittaṃ aparāparaṃ manasikaroto pavattaṃ samatik-kamitvā appavattaṃ okkamati, appavattamanuppatto, mahārāja, sammāpaṭipanno ‘Nibbānaṃ sacchikaroti’ti vuccatī”ti.”*

“The mind of a meditator who is observing and noting continuously, swims out of the stream of incessantly arising mind and matter, and reversing the process of existences reaches a state of non-occurrence. Great King, one who has followed the right method and attained the state of non-occurrence is said to have realised the peaceful bliss of nibbāna.”

A person who, having correctly practised insight meditation beginning from the stage of the analytical knowledge of mind and matter up to the knowledge of equanimity and knowledge of adaptation, acquires the knowledge of the cessation formations, which is to be regarded as attaining nibbāna. “One who has followed the right method (*sammāpaṭipanno*),” conveys the sense that the manifestations of mind and matter that have arisen through the six sense-doors at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking, should be continuously contemplated and noted. When concentration gains strength while contemplation is being carried on, the knowledge that discriminates matter and mind will occur. Thereafter, the knowledge by discerning conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*) arises. After that, having realised the nature of mind and matter as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self, knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-ñāṇa*) is developed. At this stage of awareness, the knowledge of arising and dissolution that is gained as a matter of course, is not yet the momentary realisation of the rapid occurrence of phenomena. Afterwards, the arising and dissolution of matter and mind is perceived with acceleration. This perception is the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). While this knowledge is taking place, brilliant lights may be perceived. At the same time, feelings of joy (*pīti*) become obvious. Then, mindfulness, concentration, and insight become remarkably strong. Both body and mind become calm and tranquil (*passaddhi*).

Next comes knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*), at which stage only the vanishing of sense-consciousness and sense-objects becomes predominant. At this stage, the shape of material elements are no longer clearly perceived and are found to be vanishing rapidly every time contemplation is made. As everything vanishes so quickly, knowledge becomes very clear that all phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and ungovernable in the sense that they do not belong to a self. Next, knowledge of fearfulness (*bhaya-ñāṇa*) arises. Then knowledge of misery (*ādinava-ñāṇa*), is realised followed by knowledge of disgust (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*). Thereafter, the knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitu-kamyatā-ñāṇa*) occurs where he looks forward to escape from mind and matter. At this stage it is usually felt that if the psycho-physical phenomena of mind and matter came to an end or become extinct, then complete freedom from misery, pain, and all suffering will be gained. This is the knowledge that looks forward to nibbāna. Then it must be contemplated and noted again to be able to escape from mind and matter to fulfil the desire to abandon them, hoping to realise the true nibbāna. This is knowledge of re-observation (*paṭisañkhānupassana-ñāṇa*). When this knowledge is fully strengthened, knowledge of equanimity about formations (*sañkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*), is realised. This knowledge is extremely active, dexterous, gentle, and good. At this stage, contemplating in a sitting posture for one or two hours is not at all tiresome or painful. Even a period of three hours would seem just a brief moment. No special endeavour or care needs to be made while contemplating. The mind does not go astray or wander at all and is very gentle, delicate, soft, and subtle. When this knowledge becomes mature and strong, knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), will occur, and through the Noble Path, it will pass into a state falling within the realm of the cessation of mind and matter.

What has been stated above is in line with the correct method of practising meditation as laid down in the Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Visuddhimagga. The present illustration indicating how nibbāna is realised through the Noble Path as cited in the Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Milinda Pañhā, merely relates to the knowledge of the cessation of mental and physical aggregates. This is the way in which realisation of the fruit of the holy life occurs.

The way in which successive fetters are destroyed through the Four Noble Paths is distinctive. It should be noted that how this distinctive cessation (*visesa nibbāna*) of defilements occurs is not explained in the Paṭisambhidāmagga or Milinda Pañhā. However, as explained earlier, this distinctive nature, being the extinction of defilements falling within the ambit of the fruits of the holy life is not a special type of nibbāna distinct from any other. It must be fully elaborated to enable meditators to understand clearly how nibbāna, called the Noble Truth of Cessation, is contemplated with attentiveness and realised when the Noble Path is achieved through developing the path of insight, since Dhammadinnā explained that the Noble Eightfold Path the Truth of the Path, which can lead to nibbāna, also called the cessation of the personality.

After listening to the answer given by Dhammadinnā on the subject of the Four Noble Truths, Visākha became convinced that she had found real happiness in the Buddha's dispensation for the simple reason that one who could not find such satisfaction would be unable to reply to all of the questions. Dhammadinnā had stood the test well in being able to tackle all of the questions lucidly. In this universe, just as the moon and the sun are conspicuous, in the Buddha's dispensation, the Four Noble Truths stand prominent.

The Blessed One and eminent elders taught these Four Noble Truths. One is taught what is meant by the Four Noble Truths from the time of one's first going forth. Since she was intelligent, it may be that Dhammadinnā was able to give these answers after memorising what she had been taught. Therefore, judging merely from the answers given, he was not yet certain that she had personally acquired the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths through genuine insight. Visākha reflected that only if she could answer analytical questions on the Four Noble Truths properly, could he be sure about the depth of her knowledge. So he continued to ask her as follows:

### Is Attachment the Same as the Aggregates?

Q *“Taññeva nu kho, ayye, upādānaṃ te pañcupādānakkhandhā udāhu aññatra pañcahupādānakkhandhehi upādāna”nti? — “Sister! Is attachment (upādāna) the same as the aggregates of attachment (upādānakkhandhā)? Or is attachment something distinct from the five aggregates of attachment?”*

This is a question difficult to answer. However, as Dhammadinnā was an Arahant endowed with analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidāñāṇa*), she was able to reply immediately.

### Attachment Is not the Same as the Aggregates

A “*Na kho, āvuso Visākha, taññeva upādānaṃ te pañcupādānakkhandhā, nāpi aññatra pañcahupādānakkhandhehi upādānaṃ. Yo kho, āvuso Visākha, pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu chandarāgo taṃ tattha upādānaṃ*”<sup>ti</sup>. — “Friend Visākha! Attachment by itself is not the same as the five aggregates of attachment. Attachment is also not something separate from the aggregates of attachment. Attachment and the aggregates of attachment do not convey the same sense and cannot be treated as identical. However, attachment is not entirely separated from the aggregates of attachment.”

Then the question arises why it is so? The explanation given was: “Friend Visākha! Passionate desire (*chandarāga*) is present in the five aggregates of attachment. This desire for attachment generates instinctive craving in the five aggregates and brings about attachment. This means that passionate desire is attachment. Desire (*chanda*) means attachment, which is nothing but craving. Passion (*rāga*) is also grasping or craving. That is to say that this clinging with passionate desire or craving is regarded as attachment (*upādāna*). To explain how this craving arises is that it clings with desire to form or matter (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental formations (*sankhārā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which constitute the five aggregates. The Puṇṇama Sutta of the Khandhasamyutta (S.iii.99), contains a reply given by the Buddha in response to a query raised by a bhikkhu. The question and answer contained in that sutta is exactly the same. Therefore, according to the teachings in the Suttanta there is only one kind of attachment, which means the same as passionate desire. So attachment is nothing but the aggregates of attachment, then the craving which induces attachment may be said to be the aggregates of attachment. In that case, matter, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness may not be termed “the aggregates of attachment.” Next mental formations (*cetasikā*) — forty-nine with the exception of craving — cannot be called “the aggregates of attachment.” If the aggregates



of attachment are considered as attachment, then all five aggregates should have been called attachment. However, attachment and the aggregates of attachment are not identical. If, however, attachment is said to be independent of the five aggregates, then passionate desire cannot be regarded as the aggregates either. Therefore, the question whether attachment and the aggregates of attachment are one and the same has been rejected, but the question whether they are different has also been put aside as unacceptable.

In fact, craving and attachment, or passionate desire, is included in the the aggregate of mental formations, but according to the teaching in the Suttas, the forty-nine types of mental formations with the exception of craving, may not be regarded as attachment. On the other hand, according to the Abhidhamma teaching, wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), which is also included in the said forty-nine mental formations, may be called attachment. If the interpretation is to be made in line with both Abhidhamma and the Suttanta, then if the said craving were taken as attachment, it would amount to the inclusion of wrong view, the one which is not prescribed. The four types of attachment as stated in the Abhidhamma have been explained earlier. The statement of answer wherein “passionate desire which clings to the aggregates of attachment is said to be attachment” will again be clarified. This attachment to views (*diṭṭhupādāna*) will also have to be included and shown according to the Abhidhamma teaching.

For having failed to note with mindfulness in the act of seeing and hearing, pleasurable attachment to the tangible form of eye and visual object occurs bringing into operation the craving and attachment. Undoubtedly, attachment to views will appear if attachment occurs with a wrong conception that there is a self or a being. If attachment to pleasant and unpleasant sensations occurs with pleasurable delight from the act of seeing or hearing, craving and attachment will occur. If attachment arises with a mistaken notion that it is “I” who feel, attachment to views will appear. If attachment with pleasurable sensations to what is perceived occurs, craving and attachment will arise. If wrongly perceived that it is “I” who perceives it, then, attachment to views will occur. As for the aggregate of mental formations, it is too wide a subject to cover adequately. There are fifty kinds altogether.

To cite just a few: If attachment occurs with clinging to mental formations that arise in the act of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, such as knowing, thinking, reflecting, talking, doing something and other occurrences of mental states, *e.g.*, consciousness of form, sound, odour, flavour, tactile sensation, thought, feelings of joy, happiness, pity, respect, good-will, desirable feelings or delightful sensations, anger, animosity *etc.*, craving and attachment will occur. If the wrong notion of a self being consciousness of such mental formations occurs, then it becomes attachment to views. In brief, if it is wrongly conceived that it is “I” who sees, hears, feels, *etc.*, then attachment to views arises.

Matter, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, which are subject to attachment, whether they are viewed with pleasurable delight or with a wrong view arising from craving, they are merely the five aggregates of attachment. The five aggregates, which are prone to attachment, even though they may not be subject to attachment, are called the aggregates of attachment. The manifested mental and physical aggregates are known as the aggregates of attachment because if they are not contemplated they are subject to attachment by the evil influence of craving and wrong views. This is in spite of the fact that they can be realised as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self through insight meditation. The fundamental point to remember is that craving with wrong view, which is likely to induce attachment, is called attachment. Being subject to attachment, it is also known as the aggregate of attachment. It may be understood that craving and wrong view are included in aggregate of mental formations. On hearing the answer relating to attachment and the aggregates of attachment, Visākha, came to the conclusion that Dhammadinnā had indeed become an Arahant fully endowed with analytical knowledge. He proceeded to ask her about the arising of personality-view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*).

## How Does Personality-view Arise?

Q “*Kathaṃ panāyye, sakkāyadiṭṭhi hotī’ti?*”

This means: “What is personality-view, which is the wrong conception of a self or “I”? That is to say, how does it occur?”

The arising phenomena of mind and matter, which are conspicuous at every moment of seeing hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing, are obviously the personality. To have a wrong notion

that these aggregates are a living being or an individual is personality-view. The question thus put is about how this personality-view arises. To this question, Dhammadinnā gave the following answer.

### Personality-view Arises in an Ordinary Person

A *“Idhāvuso Visākha, assutavā puthujjano, ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisadhammassa akovido sappurisadhamme avinīto, rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Vedanaṃ . . . . Saññaṃ.. Saṅkhāre.. Viññānaṃ attato samanupassati, viññānavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā viññānaṃ, viññānasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Evaṃ kho, āvuso Visākha, sakkāyadiṭṭhi hotī”ti.*

This means, in this world of human beings, an ordinary person (*puthujjana*) has a wrong notion of the physical body as an individual or a self. This is a wrong conception of one’s own body (*sakkāya*) called personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*). In this world, there are two types of individuals. One belongs to the class of ordinary persons who form the majority, whereas the other belongs to the rank of the Buddha’s disciples called “Noble Ones (*ariyapuggala*).” Among ordinary people, there are two different kinds of individuals: the uninformed<sup>1</sup> (*assutavā*) and the well-informed (*sutavā*). The ordinary person belongs to the inferior uninformed type. What is meant is a person who has never heard of the Buddha’s teaching. As he or she is lacking in the particular knowledge of Dhamma, he or she is considered to be an uninformed person. Being uninformed, he or she has no knowledge of the fact that the material body is only composed of mind and matter, which is merely a process of cause and effect. Neither does he or she realise that there is no such thing as an enduring living entity self.

A person who has not yet practised insight meditation or who has practised meditation, but has not yet attained analytical knowledge of mind and matter (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*) that distinguishes between mind and matter, is to be regarded as an uninformed person. Such a person entertains a wrong view that the body is his or her own

<sup>1</sup> The original translation was “ignorant.” The PTS dictionary gives the meaning of “*assutavānt*” as “one who has not heard” or “ignorant.” To use the term “ignorant” may seem derogatory. It means, literally, one who has not heard (the teaching), so “uninformed” is a better translation. There are, of course, plenty who have heard the teaching, but who make no effort to understand it, and who may be ignorant. (ed.)

self. This erroneous conception is called personality-view. The body, which comprises clearly manifested material elements, is viewed as a living being or a self. How? It may be explained that whenever seeing occurs, the eye and the visual object are obviously present. In the same way, in the case of hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching — the ear and the sound, the nose and the odour, the tongue and the taste, the body and the touch respectively, are conspicuous. These are, in fact, just physical elements, and what is conceived as a self or “I,” or a living entity is a wrong view. This mistaken conception is called personality-view. The body is generally viewed as a living being or a self. This wrong notion arises from ignorance. The truth will be realised only after the acquirement of insight. Of course, after realising nibbāna through the path of Stream-winning, personality-view cannot possibly arise. If mind and matter can be truly distinguished, this wrong notion can be removed.

There are other causes besides ignorance that lead to that wrong conception. If one sees a Noble One in person, without possessing a Noble One’s knowledge, it may be said that one has not seen a Noble One. Unless one becomes a Noble One, one is not considered to have seen a Noble One. When the Buddha left the Uruvela forest for the city of Benares to deliver his first discourse, he came across [Upaka](#), a naked ascetic. In the present day, Upaka would be referred to as a Jain. Upaka asked the Blessed One whether he (the Buddha) deserved to be called “Infinite Conqueror (*anantajīna*),” or “Victorious One.” As the Blessed One had reached the stage whereby all human passions had become extinct, he replied that he deserved to be called “conqueror (*jīna*).” However, the naked ascetic Upaka lacked any appreciation about the Buddha and the Noble Ones. He therefore just remarked that it could have been true as stated by the Buddha. Making way for the Buddha to pass by, he proceeded on his own journey.<sup>1</sup> Judging from this incident it is clear that Upaka saw the Buddha with his eyes, and heard the Buddha’s reply of being a conqueror. However, because of his ignorance, he did not know what is meant by a Buddha or a Noble One.

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<sup>1</sup> In the account of this meeting in the Vinaya Mahāvagga, no mention is made of Upaka asking the Buddha if he is the “Infinite Conqueror.” He just remarks how clear his complexion is, who his teacher is, and what is his teaching. It is many years later, when the Buddha knows that Upaka is coming to see him, that he tells the monks to allow anyone asking for the “*anantajīna*” to come and meet him (ed.)

On arrival at the Deer Park at Saranath near Benares, the Buddha found the five ascetics who had abandoned him, disappointed when he gave up practising austerities. Informing them of his accomplishment of the noble Dhamma and his attainment of Enlightenment, he compassionately coaxed them to listen to what he had to teach. The group of five ascetics, however, remained incredulous, not aware that he was a Noble One. They refused to listen to him at first, doubting how he could have gained higher knowledge after abandoning austere practices and resuming to taking regular food, when he had not been able to achieve it even with total abstention from food and the practice of rigorous austerities. Three times they rejected his invitation to listen to his teachings. They thought that Buddhahood was not within his reach after giving up austerities. Only when he asked them whether they had ever known him speak like that before, did the five ascetics become convinced.

The Buddha then gave his first discourse: "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Truth" (the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta). While listening to this discourse, the leader of the five ascetics, Venerable Koṇḍañña attained the pure and spotless eye of Dhamma and became a Stream-winner. Then only, Venerable Koṇḍañña realising that Gotama had actually become a real Buddha having overcome all defilements, asked for the Buddha's forgiveness.

The Buddha beckoned him, "Come, monk (*ehi bhikkhu*)," and thus ordained him as his disciple. What is to be understood by "One who sees the Dhamma sees me (*Dhammaṃ passanto maṃ passati*)" is that only one who sees nibbāna with the eye of wisdom really sees the Buddha. According to this teaching, he will know who the Buddha is if he is aware of the Dhamma. Without the true knowledge of the Dhamma, one cannot see the Buddha or a Noble One. As long as the Noble Dhamma is not realised, attachment to self will continue to occur. The expression, "Not seeing a Noble One," conveys the same sense as being uninformed or ignorant regarding the truth. The Noble Dhamma means the requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya dhamma*), which are the accessories to higher knowledge.

There are thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment. They are the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*), the four bases of success (*iddhipāda*), the five controlling faculties (*indriya*), the five powers (*bala*), the seven factors

of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), and the eight path factors (*maggāṅga*). To be well-versed in those noble teachings, mindfulness needs to be developed, which means to practise insight meditation. To acquire this knowledge and to become thoroughly proficient one should practise mindfulness. The meditators who practise at this centre should contemplate and note as “walking,” while walking, in accordance with the instruction in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: “*Gacchanto vā Gacchami’ti pajānāti.*” They must contemplate and note as “standing,” “sitting,” “lying,” “bending,” and “stretching” as the case may be. They note the movements of the abdomen every time it rises or falls. This amounts to developing mindfulness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), whenever bodily movement occur. The motto to remember is: **“Know what you are doing every time bodily movements occur.”**

When thoughts of desire arise in the process of contemplating the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, note as “thinking,” “imagining,” *etc.* This amounts to developing mindfulness of consciousness (*cittānupassanā*), in accordance with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which says: “*Sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘Sarāgaṃ cittaṃ’ti pajānāti,*” which means the lustful mind is clearly known as it occurs. The motto to remember is: **“Know what you are thinking every time mental activity occurs.”**

When painful or unbearable sensations of stiffness or pain are felt, meditators must contemplate and note as “stiff,” “painful,” “hot,” *etc.* When feelings of elation or disappointment occur, meditators should note them as “elated” or “disappointed.” This is developing mindfulness of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), as prescribed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which says: “*Sukhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno ‘Sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayami’ti pajānāti.*” The meaning of this is to know pleasant feelings as and when they are felt. The relevant motto is: **“Know what you are feeling every time pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings occur.”**

While contemplating at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or knowing, it must be noted as “seeing,” “hearing,” “smelling,” “tasting,” “touching,” or “knowing.” As the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta says: “*Cakkhuṅca pajānāti rūpe ca pajānāti.*” It means that the eye is known and the visual object is known, which amounts to developing mindfulness of mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*). The motto is: **“Know what you are knowing**

every time mental objects occur.” If seeing or hearing occur, they should be contemplated and noted with the knowledge of discrimination. When any hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) such as sensual desire or anger arises, these must be contemplated and known. Awareness of these things through contemplation may be said to have imbibed the nature of awareness by the mind that knows.

### Mindfulness Develops the Requisites of Enlightenment

As stated in the foregoing, if the four foundations of mindfulness are developed, it would embrace the four right efforts. Absorption occurs in the form of exertion by practising meditation to develop concentration. To amplify:

1. Every time contemplation is made, it amounts to the completion of exertion to deter unwholesome states that have not yet arisen, from springing up.
2. It completes the exertion to remove unwholesome states that have arise, and to prevent them from increasing.
3. It completes the exertion arouse wholesome states such as insight and the Noble Path, which have not yet arisen.
4. Each time contemplation is made, the wholesome states already gained will be maintained, developed, and matured.

It is, therefore, obvious that every time contemplation is carried out, the four right efforts are included.

With regard to the four bases of success (*iddhipāda*), if one of them is involved, it will serve the purpose. Whenever contemplation is made depending on earnest desire, it embraces the will to succeed (*chandiddhipāda*). Depending on energetic striving, it embraces the strenuous effort (*viriyiddhipāda*). Depending on the zealous mind, it embraces the necessary application of mind (*cittiddhipāda*). Depending on deep wisdom, it makes a thorough investigation (*vimaṃsiddhipāda*). From this it is clear that one of the four bases of success is included every time contemplation is carried on.

Every time contemplation is made, confidence and mental clarity are involved. These faculties are: 1) confidence (*saddhindriyaṃ*), 2) exertion made to gain insight (*viriyindriyaṃ*), 3) mindfulness (*satindriyaṃ*), 4) the mind is fixed attentively on the object of contemplation with concentration (*samādhindriyaṃ*), 5) the true nature of the object contemplated is known with wisdom

(*paññindriyaṃ*). It is evident that every time contemplation is made, the five controlling faculties are engaged.

Power (*bala*) is defined as an army captain (*bo*) or a force. This means it is the strength supporting the practise of meditation (*bhāvanā*). These five powers: confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom are the same as the five controlling faculties, and so the five powers are clearly involved in the same way.

Among the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), the enlightenment factor of mindfulness (*sati sambojjhaṅga*) is the same as the four foundations of mindfulness. The enlightenment factor of investigation (*dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga*) conveys the same sense as the controlling factor of wisdom. The enlightenment factor of energy (*virīya sambojjhaṅga*) carries the same sense as the controlling factor of exertion. The enlightenment factor of concentration (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*) has the same meaning as the controlling factor of concentration. Only three factors are distinct: the enlightenment factors of joy (*pīti sambojjhaṅga*), tranquillity (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*), and equanimity (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*).

Of these three, joy and tranquillity are very obvious at the stage of knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*). Equanimity also becomes prominent as no special effort is required when contemplation is strong and stable. However, on reaching the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations (*sāṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*), it becomes extremely clear and vivid. Therefore, it is clear that in the developing four foundations of mindfulness, the seven factors of enlightenment are fully embraced.

Right View, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, four out of eight path factors, convey the same sense as the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, and the controlling faculties and powers of concentration and wisdom. Since Right Thought accompanies the path factor of Right View, it is obviously completed simultaneously with the controlling faculty and power of wisdom. The three path factors of the morality group do not by themselves come into operation while contemplating. However, they have been accomplished from the time of the observance of moral precepts. In the course of contemplation, they remain intact as before. Therefore, the observance of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, may be said to be fully maintained and observed during



the period of contemplation. In other words, it may be taken for granted that during the momentary realisation of the Noble Path, as the main defilements, which destroy or corrupt morality, are prevented from arising, these three path faculties may be said to be included and fulfilled by the accomplishment of momentary abandonment (*tadaṅga pahāna*) derived from insight knowledge. This is how the eight path factors come into play and are fully embraced in the process of contemplation. An ordinary person who is not adept in the knowledge of the Noble Dhamma, will have a mistaken view of his or her own self as a living being. Those who are well equipped with that knowledge will truly and clearly comprehend mind and matter as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

### Further Interpretation

O, Visākha! In this world there are people who are really ignorant or uninformed. They do not yet know or see the Noble Ones. They are not well-informed about the Dhamma. As they are not properly trained and convinced of the virtues of this teaching, they are uncivilized, unlearned, and unwise. This kind of person wrongly believes that the material body is a self or a living being. Such a wrong belief is personality-view. In the earlier portion of this Sutta, the term “Sakkāya” was clarified as an aggregate of mind and matter.

### Four Personality-views Relating to Matter

There are cases where the physical body is wrongly viewed as a self. The organs of sense, such as the eye, and the visual object are wrongly considered by some people as self. When seeing of one’s own hands or legs occurs, the eye, which is a material element, is wrongly conceived as a self. In the same way, whenever hearing and bodily contact occurs, the ear, the body and the object of sense are mistakenly conceived as a living entity and as self. Similarly, in the act of seeing and touching some other person, a wrong notion arises regarding him as an a self or a being. The four primary elements (*mahābhūta*) constituting the body — earth (*paṭhavi*), i.e., hardness or softness of the material element, fire (*tejo*) or temperature, air (*vāyo*) or pressure and movement, and water (*āpo*) or cohesion, are wrongly conceived as self. This is a wrong conception of personality-view in so far as matter is concerned. This first personality-view relates to the material aggregates.

When such a misconception arises, all acts of seeing, hearing, thinking, and the feelings emanating therefrom are erroneously viewed as a self with whose ability these mental activities have seemingly taken place.

The second way that personality-view occurs in connection with the material aggregate is that the self is misconceived as being composed of the form or body. This false conception arises from imagining things, which is consciousness appearing as a delusion of mentality (*nāma*). It is like the shadow of a tree that actually exists. In fact, the material form, figure, or shape is considered as being in existence on the strength of the knowing mind, the mental aggregate.

The third way that personality-view occurs in connection with materiality is when there is a wrong belief that this whole body or form comes to exist depending solely on self. It is something like the fragrance that is inherent in a flower. The thinking and knowing mind, which are mental phenomena, are regarded as self, and the body is regarded as coming into existence depending upon that self. This belief is very hard to explain.

The fourth misconception arises when it is wrongly believed that the self dwells in the material body. The knowing and thinking mind (*nāma*) is considered as a soul or self. Even among Buddhists those who are not learned have this kind of misconception. The soul of a dead person is wrongly believed to have left the body to reside in another. It is said to be the same soul that has passed on to the new existence and stays in the womb of the mother. This is how people generally presume the arising consciousness as a self, which is wrongly believed as existing dependent on the material body. In fact, according to the Buddha's teaching there is no such thing as a self, soul, or a living being. There is only a continuous process of mind and matter arising and disappearing, the physical and mental elements being in a state of continual flux, according to circumstances.

When approaching death, if defilements are not yet extinct, attachment to one of three things — kamma, a sign of kamma, or a sign of one's destiny — arises, followed by the decease consciousness (*cuti citta*). When this happens, no new mind or matter occur again in its present form. That is why it is called "death." However, it does not come to entire cessation. Decease consciousness occurs after getting attached to the object to which a person clings on his or her

death-bed, and according to their kamma, fresh consciousness arises in a new existence. At the same time, the matter on which consciousness depends, also occurs. When this phenomena of mind and matter cease from beginning to end, then new mind and matter continue to occur repeatedly without a break. This is how a new existence of mind and matter occur owing to the effects of kamma. It is not that the living being has disappeared or has been destroyed when the last consciousness ceases. The being has not moved to another place. This is how death and fresh existence happen according to the Buddha's teachings. Nevertheless, those who are not accomplished with the knowledge of Dhamma still run away with the idea that the self or a being, which has the faculty of knowing, has gone to reside in another place. This personality-view, the belief that a self exists dependent on the body, is self-view (*atta-diṭṭhi*).

### **Twenty Kinds of Personality-view**

1. To think that material body is a self or being is personality-view.
2. To think that there is a body in self or being, is personality-view.
3. To think that the body resides in a self or being, is personality-view.
4. To think that the self or being, resides in the material body is personality-view.

These four personality-views are the wrong conception relating to the aggregate of matter. As in the case of four self-views, personality-view that occurs in relation to the body, four personality-views arise in connection with each of the four mental aggregates: feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. In regard to feelings, the sensation felt is wrongly conceived as self.

Another conception is that there is self in feelings. It is also imagined that feelings reside in the self. Feeling is also conceived as self. It is thought that the sensation felt is nothing but one's own self. For example: pleasurable feeling is identified with "I" who feels it. Painful or disagreeable feeling is identified with "I" who feels it. Neutral feeling is identified with "I" who feels it. These three kinds of feeling, which are wrongly conceived as "I" or self, are personality-view. This belief causes one to hold the view that thoughts and mental formations except the sensation of feeling are not considered as a being. Then, the material elements are also not

considered as “I.” Only the sensation felt or the feeling that arises is viewed and identified as “I.” This is the first way that personality-view occurs in connection with feelings.

The second way is a conception that holds a wrong view that only “I” or self, or a being, is feeling the sensation. The third is the mistaken view that the sensation is felt depending upon a self. The fourth that the self exists depending upon the feeling. According to the second, third, and fourth ways, personality-view occurs because feeling is not viewed as self, whereas the remaining elements of mind and matter are regarded as self. It may summarised as follows:

1. To think that feeling is a self or a being, is personality-view.
2. To think that there is feeling in the self or a being is personality-view.
3. To think that it is a self or being, who feels the sensation, is personality-view.
4. To think that the self or being exists in the feeling is personality-view. These are the four personality-views that are wrongly conceived in relation to the aggregate of feelings.

Wrong view also arises in relation to the aggregate of perception. As in the case of feelings, with due alteration of details, perception is mistakenly viewed as a self or a living being. All that is seen or heard and all that is perceived is misconceived as “I” who sees or hears and perceives. In brief, the same misconception arises in respect of perception (*saññā*) springing from the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind in contact with external objects.

In relation to the aggregate of mental formations, which is concerned with volitional energy arising from the state of mind that causes wholesome or unwholesome actions or thoughts, the misconception occurs that it is a self or being who is performing, speaking, planning, thinking, getting angry, enjoying pleasures, being happy, dejected, greedy, *etc.*

In the same way, with regard to the aggregate of consciousness wrong view arises. Consciousness is wrongly conceived as a self or being is also wrongly presumed to be the seat of mind-consciousness, *etc.* Whenever natural phenomena arise from the six sense-doors such as seeing, hearing, smelling tasting, touching, or thinking, the consciousness that appears is considered as a self, and the misconception occurs thinking it is “I” who sees, hears, etc.

Wrong view that arises in relation to each of the above mentioned five aggregates has been described briefly, four in each of them (if enumerated in detail), making a total of twenty. This is how personality-view occurs as answered by Dhammaddinā in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

### Another Way to Consider Personality-view

1. The body is thought of as self, feelings are thought of as self, perceptions are thought of as self, mental formations are thought of as self, consciousness is thought of as self.
2. It is conceived that there is body in self, that there is feeling in self, that there is perception in self, that there are mental formations in self, that there is consciousness in self.
3. It is imagined that the body resides in self, that feeling resides in self, that perception resides in self, that mental formations reside in self, that consciousness resides in self.
4. It is conceived that self resides in the body, that self resides in feelings, that self resides in perceptions, that self resides in mental formations, that self resides in consciousness.

With respect to category one above, the first of the five wrong views is attachment solely to materiality. The remaining four have their attachment to only to mentality. In categories two to four, the first wrong view in each of them has attachment purely to mentality. Therefore, there is only one personality-view that attaches purely to materiality as being self. There are seven personality-views that have attachment purely to mentality, which is regarded as self. The remaining four multiplied by three, making twelve, are attachment to mind and matter combined. However, in categories two to four, as no specific mention is made of the fact that there is attachment to matter, or mind, or mind and matter as being self, the ways of attachment to self, fifteen in all, may be said to include attachment to concepts (*paññatti*) as self.

The way of attachment to concepts has to be mentioned because in the Brahmajāla Sutta Commentary, the material meditation device (*kaṣiṇa-rūpa*) is described as a self to which attachment occurs. In the religious scriptures relating to beliefs in India, the self or soul is shown as quite distinct and aloof from the five aggregates. However, if the self were a mere concept, no attachment could possibly occur as awareness of seeing or hearing should not have arisen. If this self is

capable of seeing, hearing, knowing, or grasping, then it may be stated that it cannot be separate from the five aggregates. Therefore, it may be accepted that in describing the twenty personality-views no mention is made as to how attachment occurs to concepts only, but only the way of attachment to the five aggregates is shown. To cite an instance, from the Buddha's lifetime, the ascetic [Saccaka](#), admitted that he believed that the five aggregates were the self. Such being the case, if any one of the aggregates, or two, three, four, or all five aggregates are viewed as a self, a being, or "I," then this view is a false conception of personality-view. If the phenomena of mind and matter appearing in the act of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, or all imaginary thoughts together with mental factors that arise, are viewed or contemplated as "I" or self, then such a conception is nothing but personality-view.

After giving an elaborated account on the subject of personality-view, Dhammadinnā made summarised it as follows:

A "Friend Visākha! If in the way stated in the foregoing that the material body is considered as self, *etc.*, personality-view, a false conception that self resides in the clearly manifested aggregates of mind and matter, will undoubtedly arise."

Having heard this answer, Visākha proceeded to ask how personality-view could be dispelled. The answer given by Dhammadinnā was as stated below.

## How Personality-view Is Rejected

A "*Idhāvuso Visākha, sutavā ariyasāvako, ariyānaṃ dassāvī ariyadhammassa kovidō ariyadhamme suvinīto, sappurisānaṃ dassāvī sappurisdhammassa kovidō sappurisdhamme suvinīto, na rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, na rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, na attani vā rūpaṃ, na rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Na vedanaṃ ... Na saññaṃ ... Na saṅkhāre ... Na viññānaṃ attato samanupassati, na viññānavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, na attani vā viññānaṃ, na viññānasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Evaṃ kho, āvuso Visākha, sakkāyaditṭhi na hotī'ti.* — "Friend Visākha! Here (in the Buddha's dispensation), a well-informed (*sutavā*) noble disciple (*ariyasāvako*) (one who has at least realised nibbāna through the path of Stream-winning), being endowed with insight (*kovidō*), does not think of matter ... feelings ... perceptions ... mental formations ... consciousness as a self."

If nibbāna has been seen, the true nature of mind and matter, which arises and dissolves at every split-second is already known as impermanent and unsatisfactory. It will, therefore, be realised that mind and matter are mere phenomena appearing and disappearing instantly according to circumstances. One cannot possibly make it happen according to one's own wish. Neither can one prevent it dissolving. The realisation then comes that it is ungovernable and is not a self, but not-self (*anatta*). One will then have no attachment to mind and matter in the form of a self or a being, whenever they arise in the act of seeing or hearing. A Stream-winner has got rid of such misconceptions as a self. He or she is free from personality-view, doubts, and erroneous perceptions. Moreover, the eradication of the concept of self is also concerned with a meditator who is practising insight meditation. Such a meditator who has reached the stage of knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-ñāṇa*), knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), and particularly the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*), is not only aware of impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, but also of not-self with direct personal insight every time contemplation is made. As such, attachment to a self for every known sensation, will not have any opportunity to occur. Freedom from such attachment amounts to dispelling the wrong view of self because not-self is truly realised through insight. However, thoughts relating to mind and matter that have been missed during contemplation, will not be free from the attachment of self.

Those who are deeply satisfied with the teaching that the incessant arising and dissolution of mind and matter are merely impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self may be said to be persons equipped with the full knowledge of the Dhamma. Such knowledgeable persons are called a virtuous ordinary person (*kalayāṇa-puthujjana*). They can be regarded as those who are, to some extent, free from attachment to the self. However, this freedom from attachment to self is not on an equal footing with the kind of detachment gained from insight knowledge that dispels self-view. What I am driving at is, a Noble One never regards mind and matter as a self, and a meditator who is practising insight meditation, having realised through contemplation that mind and matter are merely impermanent and unsatisfactory will never regard mind and matter as a self. It should be borne in mind that to get rid of the attachment to self, contemplation must

be done to realise by direct insight that the phenomena arising at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing, are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

There are, of course, other reasons for not regarding mind and matter as a self while one is thus contemplating or when one has realised the Path. These are not viewed as self since one has seen and known the Noble Ones. As stated earlier, being a Noble One, he or she has seen and known a Noble One. That is why it is considered as similar to one who has accomplished personal knowledge after attaining the Path.

One who has become an adept in the requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya dhamma*) having attained the knowledge of a Noble One, will not regard mind and matter as self. It so happens because one has become a Noble One. Or it may be that one has the insight knowledge of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self. This conveys the same sense as the expression “seeing a Noble One.” Then, as one has been well taught in the Noble Dhamma that brings wisdom (making him or her civilized) he or she will not regard them as self. This means that he or she has also become a Noble One. By being well taught in the Noble Dhamma and becoming civilized according to restraint by discipline, one becomes skilled in preventing unwholesome states. Disciplined by restraint (*saṃvara vinaya*) comprises: 1) restraint by morality (*sīla saṃvara*), 2) restraint by mindfulness (*sati saṃvara*), 3) restraint by wisdom (*ñāṇa saṃvara*), 4) restraint by patience (*khantī saṃvara*), and 5) restraint by exertion (*virīya saṃvara*).

For monks, restraint by morality means the restraint exercised to prevent offences against the monastic discipline (Pāṭimokkha). For ordinary laymen, it is the restraint exercised according to the five precepts (*pañca sīla*). Therefore, those who respectfully observe the code of morality are restraining demerits from arising. If this discipline is maintained, it amounts to training oneself in the Noble Dhamma. As for restraint by mindfulness, it is an undertaking to refrain from the passions arising from seeing, hearing, etc., by maintaining mindfulness. It is best to train the mind to continuously contemplate and note on the arising consciousness at every moment of seeing, hearing, etc. To become aware by constantly contemplating on impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self at every moment of seeing, hearing, etc., and consequently by restraining the arising



of misconceptions of permanence *etc.*, which amounts to unwholesome states, is restraint by wisdom. The meditators here are prohibiting demerits by means of wisdom. When insight is gained while contemplating the Noble Path knowledge will be achieved. The uprooting of unwholesome states by path knowledge is restraint by wisdom. All efforts now being made by way of restraint by discipline in practising meditation are aimed at achieving the Noble Path. To endure unpleasant sensations of heat or cold, or critical remarks and personal attacks made by others are restraint by patience. Meditating with endurance despite feelings or stiffness, heat, *etc.*, arising in the body is also restraint by patience. To contemplate and dispel the unwholesome thoughts that arise is restraint by exertion. To contemplate with mindfulness to deter unwholesome states that have not yet arisen and to get rid of those that have arisen is also restraint by exertion.

On attaining the knowledge of arising and passing away, or the knowledge of dissolution, these five restraints are more or less complete. So a person who fully possesses insight knowledge having been well taught and trained in the Noble Dhamma, truly realises that all phenomena arising from the six sense-doors are merely not-self and not a self at all. With the achievement of progressive insight, knowledge of the Noble Path will eventually be gained. When such an achievement is attained, the misconception of the mental and physical aggregates as being a self will be eradicated since self-view will have been destroyed by the path of Stream-winning. Referring to how it happens as stated above, a disciple becomes civilized or well disciplined in the Noble Dhamma (*ariyadhamme suvinīto*), and so does not regard the body as self.

Next, disciplined by abandoning (*pahāna vinaya*) means the rejection of unwholesome states. There are five types of abandoning: momentary abandoning (*tadaṅga pahāna*), abandoning by suppression (*vikkhambhana pahāna*), abandoning by cutting off (*samuccheda pahāna*), abandoning by tranquillising (*paṭippassaddha pahāna*), and abandoning by relinquishment (*nissaraṇa pahāna*). Of these, the removal of a single defiled thought that occupies the mind on contact with a sense-object (*ārammaṇanussaya*) by means of the opposite views derived from insight is momentary abandoning according to the Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīka, which says: "*tadaṅgena tadaṅgassa pahānaṃ tadaṅga pahānaṃ.*" This means rejecting by an opposite view with

insight, the single defiled thought that will induce a misconception of being permanent, pleasurable, or self instead of being impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self, as is conceived in the process of contemplating and noting the acts of seeing, hearing, *etc.* Abandoning by suppression means being free from the coarser type of defilements for a considerable length of time by the faculty of access concentration and attainment concentration. Abandoning by cutting off means the extirpation of defilements, which have been relinquished through the faculty of the Noble Path. The removal of personality-view, doubt, and attachments to rites and rituals gained by the faculty of the Path of Stream-winning; or the removal of coarse greed, anger, *etc.*, which can drag down one to the lower realms; and of such defilements as craving for existence, that can elevate one to the celestial realms for more than seven existences, is abandoning by cutting off.

The destruction of the coarser types of sensual passion (*kāmarāga*) and ill-will (*vyāpāda*) by the Path of Once-returning, and the complete rooting out of all sensual passion and anger by the Path of Non-returning, are also abandoning by cutting off. The extirpation of all defilements, such as ignorance, craving, pride, *etc.*, by the Path of Arahantship is also abandoning by cutting off.

At this meditation centre, meditators are practising with a view to fully acquire momentary abandoning and gain accomplishment of abandoning by cutting off through insight. Uprooting of defilements with these four Noble Paths, and then causing the cessation of human passion is abandoning by tranquillising. No special effort is required for their removal. It means that tranquility of mind remains as usual by the influence of the Fruition of the Path (*phalasaṃpatti*). Abandoning by relinquishment is nibbāna called relinquishment (*nissaraṇa*), which comprises escape from existence by the extirpation of defilements, which then have no chance of recurrence and the total cessation of all sufferings of mind and matter. This relinquishment or release from the cycle of existence, which consists in escape from existence is called abandoning by relinquishment. On gaining the Four Paths and attaining Fruition, abandoning by relinquishment is completely fulfilled.

A fairly comprehensive account has been given to explain about the well-informed ordinary person and the Noble Ones who have got rid of attachment to the self. The self means what is regarded

as a living being. It is something that is wrongly assumed to be governable, to be responsive to the dictates of the personal command such as to make oneself go, walk, stand, sit, lie down, speak or do something according to one's own will. This is called the master self (*sāmi-atta*). Then also, it seems as if it resides permanently in the body. This is called the abiding self (*nivāsi-atta*). It would appear as if the being or self is capable of thinking, speaking, and doing things. This is called the doing self (*kāraka attā*). It means attachment to the aggregate of mental formations as being a self. All good and bad feelings that arise are considered to be felt by a self, or a being. It is called the feeling self (*vedaka attā*). This is a mistaken view of attachment to the aggregate of feelings as a self.

A Noble One who has attained Stream-winning or the higher paths is absolutely free from such attachment to self. He or she is constantly aware of the truth that it nothing but mind and matter arise and dissolve incessantly. Dhammadinnā's explanation regarding the removal of twenty kinds of personality view is the same as the removal of the four kinds of attachment to self — master self, abiding self, doing self, or the feeling self. After hearing the answer regarding the way of removing personality-views, Visākha put another question on the subject of the Noble Eightfold Path.

### What is the Noble Eightfold Path?

Q *“Katamo panāyye, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo”ti? — “Sister! What is the Noble Eightfold Path? In other words, “What is the Noble Path, which possesses eight factors?”*

This question is quite similar to the question put earlier relating to Noble Truth of the Path. As the subject of has already been dealt answered, it may be said that that the question does not deserve repetition. However, Dhammadinnā reflecting that Visākha might probably have an intention to follow up with other question based on the subject of the Noble Path, gave an appropriate reply.

### The Noble Eightfold Path Explained

A *“Ayameva kho, āvuso Visākha, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo, seyyathidaṃ — sammādiṭṭhi sammāsaṅkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati sammāsamādhi”ti. — “Friend Visākha! The Noble Eightfold Path is: Right View, Right*

Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.”

Since the Noble Eightfold Path has been explained earlier, it may not seem necessary to repeat it here. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to quote a few factors to let the reading public gain more knowledge. Teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path have often been given. This teaching is profound, and is the essence of the Buddha’s teaching, and is unique to a Buddha’s dispensation. Throughout four immeasurable aeons (*asaṅkheyya*) and a hundred thousand world cycles (*kappa*), or throughout eight immeasurable aeons and a hundred thousand world-cycles, or during sixteen immeasurable aeons and a hundred thousand world-cycles, the Bodhisattas cultivated perfections (*pārami*) of the highest order through virtuous practices towards attainment of this Noble Eightfold Path. Throughout their lifetimes too, all of the Buddhas laid emphasis on this Dhamma in their teachings to enable all trainable persons (*veneyya*) to practise and achieve the principles involved in the Path. If the Dhamma in connection with the Eightfold Path is completely accomplished, the worthy goal of Arahantship will be attained thereby realising nibbāna, the end of all suffering. Hence, the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is of paramount importance. It is necessary to practise meditation to acquire the Right View that really means an intellectual grasp of the nature of things. There are right views or understanding from the viewpoint of worldly affairs, but they are not relevant to the Noble Path. What is really important is to gain knowledge of the true nature of mind and matter that exist in one’s own person. It is essential to practise contemplation and realise with one’s own direct knowledge the phenomena of mind and matter incessantly arising and passing away from the six sense-doors every time seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or knowing occur, and to be able to make a firm decision with clear understanding that they are merely an aggregate of suffering and misery. Ordinary people who do not contemplate are trapped in misery as they have strive with worry and anxiety for the sake of enjoyment of pleasurable sense-objects. When these troublesome efforts bear fruit, the results disappear in no time. The ephemeral nature of things is very obvious when eating delicious food. Taste appears on the tongue and disappears in an instant. It is the same in the case of other sensations

too. How troublesome and miserable it is to make a living or strive for the brief satisfaction of enjoyment! Life is indeed a struggle. In every existence, one has to toil, undergoing the same kind of misery and distress for the sake of subsistence and the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. It is all the more miserable when one is cast into the lower realms. A meditator who is continuously contemplating at every moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, realises the true nature of mind and matter arising and dissolving instantaneously. With this realisation he or she becomes aware of the ungovernable nature of things and the miserable conditions of existence. He or she also realises that the moment new formations of mind and matter fail to arise, death will ensue. This condition of life attended with misery and mental frustrations is really terrible. Such realisation of the truth is the right view of insight. It is in fact knowing the Truth of Suffering. Right view brings about the subjugation of the pleasurable delight, regarding it as mere suffering only in respect of the sense object that is contemplated. In respect of objects that escaped notice while contemplating, pleasurable feelings remain active. Such cravings for pleasures are rooted out only when the Noble Path is attained. Even then, at the stage of Stream-winning, the delightful feelings arising from to mind and matter of sensual becoming are not yet totally eradicated. This is why Stream-winners enter into matrimony and are bound by the fetters of domestic life. It has been stated that even Venerable Ānanda wept bitterly with grief and lamentation when his aunt Mahāpajāpati Gotamī, the Buddha's step-mother, was approaching death (*parinibbāna*). This is evidence that he still had desire for mind and matter, which he regarded as being good and agreeable to be kept away from death. Craving for existence, which is considered fine and pleasurable, will be eliminated only when Arahantship is attained. If there is attachment to pleasurable desire one will be enmeshed in suffering in the present existence too. Those who are running a household will face suffering as they have to be anxious about their family, children, and property.

At one time when the Blessed One was residing at a village by the name of Uruvelakappa in the [Mallā](#) country, Badraka, the village headman came to the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> After paying homage, he asked the Buddha to teach him what brought suffering to mankind and what

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<sup>1</sup> Badraka Sutta (S.iv.327)

was the way to end this suffering. The Buddha began with a preliminary dialogue stating: “If I were to teach the cause and the cessation of suffering with reference to the past or the future, it may create doubt in you. I will therefore teach you how suffering is caused and how ceases in the present moment.” The Buddha then proceeded to ask him thus:

Q “Will you, headman, be afflicted with grief (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), suffering (*dukkha*), sorrow (*domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsa*) if the people living in Uruvelakappa village are killed, arrested, robbed, or abused?”

A “Yes, my Lord,” replied Badraka.

Q “Could there be a situation in which you will not be stricken with grief and distress if only some of the people are killed?”

A “Yes, my Lord. Indeed, such a situation can arise when I will not be so affected,” was the reply.

Q “Why is it so?” inquired Buddha.

A “Lord, I will suffer mental pain and distress if persons whom I love meet with suffering, but I will not be mentally affected and distressed if those who are not closely acquainted with me or not dear to me suffer tribulations,” answered Badraka.

This would indicate that in connection with those who are dear and beloved to one through attachment or passionate desire, should anything untoward happen to them, anxiety and sorrow will arise. It means that in respect to those for whom there is no love or affection, no mental afflictions will occur. The aim of this conversation was to make Badraka understand that passionate desire is the cause of suffering and that being free from passionate desire is the cessation of the cause of suffering. Therefore, one should be fully convinced as taught by the Buddha that whatever distress and suffering one has undergone in the past or which one will have to face in the future are due to the presence of passionate desire.

Being delighted and pleased with the teachings of the Buddha, Badraka again asked the Blessed One reverentially stating: “I have a young son by the name of Ciravāsī. I put him in school just outside the village. Every day in the morning, I send a man to inquire about Ciravāsī to know how he is getting on. Until that man returns, I am

ridden with anxiety, while at the same time I wish him to be well and happy.” The Buddha then questioned Badraka:

Q “Will you be worried and stricken with grief, dismay and distress if the young lad Ciravāsī were killed, arrested, robbed, or abused?”

A “Inevitably! Lord. I would not only come to grief, but may even die,” was the reply. The Buddha remarked, “This distress and suffering is caused by passionate desire, which produces love and affection.” Then further questions and answer follows:

Q “Did you have any love and fondness for Ciravāsī’s mother, your lady, before you had seen or heard of her?”

A “No, my Lord.” was the response.

Q “Is it true that feelings of desire (*chanda*), passion (*rāga*), and affection (*pema*) have arisen in you only because you have seen, known, or heard her.”

A “Exactly, my Lord,” replied Badraka.

Q “Will you be overwhelmed with grief, dismay and despair if at all Ciravāsī’s mother were killed, arrested, robbed, or abused?”

A “Certainly, it is inevitable, my Lord. I might even die.

The Buddha made it clear that this suffering is rooted in desire (*chandamūlakam*). Badraka respectfully admitted that it was.

The story shows how suffering occurs even under the existing circumstances due to being attached to love and affection. Similarly, if one is involved in pleasurable delight with attachment to mind and matter, which are wrongly viewed as agreeable though they are in fact miserable, repeated new existences will continue to occur accompanied by misery and suffering after demise. Such attachment to pleasurable delight is craving, which is the cause of suffering. Every time it is realised through contemplation that the truth of the arising phenomena of mind and matter is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self, craving will be expelled. This amounts to dispelling the cause of suffering by the right view of insight, which realises the truth. It is to know the truth by the rejection of the cause. Every time craving is expelled, the miseries of new existences comprising mind and matter having no opportunity to occur relating to the

known feeling, will come to a cessation. This is the realisation of the truth by right view with the achievement of momentary cessation. The continuous achievement of the path factors of insight at every moment of contemplation, which promotes the development of the Path, may be regarded as the realisation of the truth. This is how true knowledge is derived according to the right view of insight.

However, the Right View gained by the Noble Path that realises nibbāna, appreciates and sees the Four Noble Truths correctly. If the arising phenomena of mind and matter taking place at the moment of seeing and hearing are erroneously conceived as permanent, desirable and pleasurable, then the cause of craving will occur. If by contemplation it is conceived as impermanent, craving will cease. If that craving ceases, right view will bring forth correct knowledge. To achieve realisation of the truth as stated, contemplation has to be done continuously. As the right view of the Noble Path sees nibbāna, it becomes clear how awareness of suffering springing from the arising and passing away of mind and matter as well as the cessation of craving are taking place. This is the truth of cessation, which means the entire cessation and extinction of all mind and matter leading eventually to nibbāna. When insight knowledge matures, all that is to be known and presently known falls into the category of complete cessation in the course of contemplating the incessant arising and dissolution of mind and matter. This is how right view correctly realises the truth of cessation. It is necessary to develop insight until the cessation of mind and matter is realised. With this developed knowledge of the true nature of mind and matter, the Noble Path can be attained. The knowledge so gained is the right view of insight. As has been stated earlier, right view means the distinctive awareness of the truth of suffering as impermanence, *etc.* Realisation is achieved at every moment of such awareness by rejecting the cause of suffering. Thus the cessation of suffering is attained. It is also realised by developing the truth of the path.

If Right View is developed, Right Thought inclining towards it is included, and so too is Right Effort, which is the persevering endeavour made to gain mindfulness and realise the truth relating to seeing, hearing, *etc.* By being aware with mindfulness, it is obvious that Right Mindfulness is already included. According to the teaching “A person whose mind is tranquil understands things in their true nature (*sammāhito yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*).” Reality can be known truly



only when one has concentration (*samādhi*) that fixes the mind with right view, it is also clear enough that Right View is included.

Next, only if purification of morality (*sīla visuddhi*), is fully accomplished, can five kinds of wisdom such as purification of view (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*) be achieved. As such achievement can be gained every time right view occurs, the path factors of morality are all included. This is quite clear. As stated before, while the right view of insight and right view of the path are occurring, the path factors of Right Thought, *etc.*, are included. So Dhammadinnā had answered that these eight factors called the Noble Eightfold Path, which has the full compliment of the eight factors, is nothing but the Noble Path. In this regard, all the path factors of insight are factors of the preliminary path, the fore-runner of the Noble Path. It should, however, be borne in mind that the Path of Stream-winning, and so forth, are the Noble Path. After hearing the above reply, Visākha put another question:

### Is the Path Conditioned or Unconditioned?

Q *“Ariyo panāyye, aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅkhato udāhu asaṅkhato”ti? — “Is the Eightfold Path conditioned or is it unconditioned?”*

### The Path Is Conditioned

To this question, Dhammadinnā gave the following answer:

A *“Ariyo kho, āvuso Visākha, aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅkhato”ti. — “Friend Visākha, the Eightfold Path is conditioned.”*

The Eightfold Path is conditioned and proceeds from causes, such as insight. Only nibbāna is unconditioned. This nibbāna symbolises supreme bliss and tranquility because the faculty of the Noble Path gives no chance for the occurrence of defilements. Tranquility, not being an occurrence, cannot be said to have arisen from a cause. What is meant by this nibbāna is that no new existence comprising unsatisfactory mind and matter will arise, because defilements, which are its cause, have become extinct, thereby bringing forth a blissful state of freedom from all forms of craving and human passion. This also cannot be called the cause of conditioned phenomena since there is no incidence or occurrence. It should only be regarded as the unconditioned, the unmade, which is not produced.”

However, the Noble Path has arisen because of insight which is preceded by the preliminary path. It has occurred because of the development of the preceding stages of insight followed in succession most closely by knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), which adapts the mind towards nibbāna, and maturity knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*), which inclines towards the cessation of mental and physical phenomena. It is also clear that it happens because of the achievement of that insight depends on material body, which affords as a cushion to lean on, as it were, and which serves as a repository. Those who are conversant with the texts, it is no gain saying that they know clearly that condition is the outcome of the Noble Path with other relevant factors. However, those who are less knowledgeable may have some doubts. Because the Noble Path is achieved after seeing the unconditioned nibbāna, which is the entire cessation of mind and matter and its concomitant sufferings, there is room to doubt whether the Path might be unconditioned, just like nibbāna. There were a number of conflicting views about it in the ancient history of Buddhism and a lot of controversies arose. It is indeed difficult to understand. Mention was made in the Points of Controversy (*Kathāvatthu*) relating to the analytical comment on the controversies on the occasion of the Third Buddhist Council. Among the controversial points, even the law of natural order (*niyāma*), was presumed to be unconditioned. If it is said to be unconditioned, then it would amount to regarding the Noble Path as unconditioned. This will be a great blunder. So, to dispel this wrong view, the question put as to whether the Noble Path is conditioned or unconditioned is quite justifiable. It is also appropriate in answering that it is conditioned. If it is unconditioned, it should remain constant as nibbāna without cessation or dissolution. However, the Noble Path, like any other thought-process, arises (*uppāda*), exists for an instant (*thiti*), followed by immediately dissolution (*bhaṅga*), and so is transitory. It is not eternal or immutable like nibbāna. Hence, as it has come about due to causes such as insight, it is clear that it is conditioned. Having heard the above answer, Visākha put another question.

### **Are the Three Groups Included by the Path?**

*“Ariyena nu kho, ayye, aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā udāhu tihi khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito”ti?*

“Sister! Are the three groups (*khandhā*) included by the Eightfold Path? Or is the Noble Path included by the three groups?”

It is hard to answer that question unless one is well-versed in the knowledge of the Noble Path and the three groups of morality, concentration, and wisdom. However, as Dhammānā was an Arahant who had gained analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidā*), she could easily tackle the question as described below:

### The Path Includes the Three Groups

*“Na kho, āvuso Visākha, ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahitā; tihi ca kho, āvuso Visākha, khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito. Yā cāvuso Visākha, sammāvācā yo ca sammā-kammanto yo ca sammājīvo ime dhammā silakkhandhe saṅgahitā. Yo ca sammāvāyāmo yā ca sammāsati yo ca sammāsamādhi ime dhammā samādhikkhandhe saṅgahitā. Yā ca sammādiṭṭhi yo ca sammāsaṅkappo, ime dhammā paññakkhandhe saṅgahitā”ti.*

“Friend Visākha! The three groups are not included by the Noble Path. The Noble Path is included by the three groups. Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood are included in the morality group. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are included in the concentration group. Right View and Right Thought are included in the wisdom group.”

Here, she meant to say that the Noble Path is supramundane, but the three groups<sup>1</sup> — morality, concentration, and wisdom — are mundane. Therefore, according to the Noble Path, the scope is narrow, whereas the range is wide in regard to the three groups. The limited scope cannot embrace the broader aspect. Likewise, the narrow scope of the Noble Path must be included within the wider scope of the three groups. Here, it may be noted and remembered that like the five aggregates of matter *etc.*, there are also five groups of the Path: 1) the morality group (*sīla khandha*), 2) the concentration group (*samādhi khandha*), 3) the wisdom group (*paññakkhandha*), 4) the freedom group (*vimutti khandha*), and 5) the knowledge of freedom group (*vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana khandha*).

<sup>1</sup> The Pāli word “*khandha*” means body, collection, group, or chapter. In this context, I think “group” is the most appropriate translation. (ed.)

Among these five the morality group means both mundane and supramundane morality. Mundane morality is the five precepts, eight precepts, ten precepts, and the monastic discipline (Pāṭimokkha). Supramundane morality means the mental formations arising in conjunction with the Noble Path: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, the three path factors of morality.

The concentration group is mundane and supramundane concentration. Mundane concentration is access concentration (*upācāra samādhi*), attainment concentration (*appanā samādhi*), and momentary concentration for insight (*vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*). Supramundane concentration is that which occurs with the Path and Fruition.

The wisdom group means mundane and supramundane wisdom. Mundane wisdom means the higher knowledge (*abhiññā*) connected with the absorptions, the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), the divine ear (*dibbasota*), mind-reading (*cetopariya-ñāṇa*), recollection of previous lives (*pubbenivāsa-ñāṇa*), and diverse psychic powers (*iddhividha*). Supramundane wisdom means knowledge of the Path and its Fruition.

The freedom group means the Fruition of the Noble Path.

The knowledge of freedom group is knowledge reflecting on the Path, its Fruition, and nibbāna immediately after attaining the Path.

After describing why the Noble Path should be included by the three groups, Dhammānā explained how it was included.

“Friend Visākha! Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood are included in the morality group.”

Right Speech means abstaining from telling lies (*musāvāda verāmaṇi*); abstaining from slander or back-biting (*pisuṇavācā verāmaṇi*); abstaining from harsh speech (*pharusavācā verāmaṇi*); and abstaining from idle chatter (*samphappalāpa verāmaṇi*). The requirements of Right Speech need to be fulfilled for the accomplishment of this path factor. Even if there is nothing to lie about, refraining from lying will amount to the fulfilment of Right Speech. The Right Speech that is included in the Noble Path is the complete rejection of thoughts as well as words or gestures to convey falsehood. A Stream-winner, being free from any vices that violate the laws of morality is purified in thoughts and deeds as morality is concerned.

Right Action means the aspect of restraint expressed in the five precepts to abstain from killing (*pāṇātipātā verāmaṇi*); to abstain

from taking anything which is not given, i.e. stealing or robbing (*adinnādānā verāmaṇi*); to abstain from illicit sexual relations (*kāmesu micchācārā verāmaṇi*). If these are strictly observed, it fulfils the requirements of Right Action. A Stream-winner, by fully developing this path factor always maintains pure morality.

Right Livelihood means to avoid making a living in dishonest way by slaughtering animals or killing other living beings, and stealing, robbing, cheating, *etc.*, are also contrary to Right Livelihood. Unlawfully or dishonestly earning a living is a wrong livelihood. By avoiding dishonest means of earning a living, it would amount to Right Livelihood. Avoiding dishonest means of living by laymen in following a trade or occupation is compatible with the requirement of this path factor. Monks should refrain from giving away fruits, flowers, *etc.*, aiming to receiving offerings of property including cash or goods in return. They must not be pretentious, assuming an attitude of having attained the attributes of concentration or wisdom, which they do not possess, to earn respect or offerings. They must avoid taking illegal or improper actions to acquire a monastery or other property that does not belong to them. Avoiding all that which should be avoided and receiving alms or food, *etc.*, according to the monastic discipline is Right Livelihood. The Right Livelihood that is included in the Noble Path is the entire rejection of all dishonest means of livelihood. By rejection of wrong livelihood through this path factor, a Stream-winner is always free from immorality and is accomplished with the pure morality.

All three path factors form the morality group. All vices that pollute or destroy the purity of morality having been eradicated for ever by the faculties of the said three path factors of morality falling within the scope of the Path Knowledge that realises nibbāna, the degree of greed (*lobha*) and anger (*dosa*) in a Stream-winner have are diminished to the point of preventing almost entirely the occurrence of coarser type of demeritorious deeds. From the secular point of view, it may seem that they lack enthusiasm. Because of this diminished strength of greed and anger, a Stream-winner, being incapable of doing evil deeds or entertaining evil and unwholesome thoughts, becomes fully accomplished with morality forever.

In regard to the concentration group, Right Concentration is included by virtue of belonging to the same class. Right Effort and Right Mindfulness are included as they lend support to concentration.

To illustrate: a flower on a tree that is beyond the reach of a person who wishes to pluck it, can be plucked with the help of a companion who should squat to serve as a stool. Since the person standing on the back of another may easily fall off, he or she must be supported by a third person to enable him or her to stand firm and erect. With the help of these two companions, flowers can be plucked without difficulty. In the same way, Right Effort supports by its faculty of exertion, and Right Mindfulness supports by steadying. Depending on these supports, the path factor of right concentration remains tranquil, fixing attention on the consciousness of nibbāna. This is why Right Effort and Right Mindfulness are included in the concentration group due to rendering assistance. On the other hand, the three path factors of morality should all be included in the group of morality by virtue of belonging to the same class.

Then Right View and Right Thought are the two factors of the wisdom group. The path factor of Right View is included by virtue of belonging to the same class. As for the path factor of Right Thought, it inclines the mind towards realising the truth, so this should be included as a supporting factor of wisdom.

This describes how the eight factors of the Noble Path are included and enumerated by the three groups. Let us recite the following to remember:

1. The three path factors of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood are included in the morality group.
2. The path factors of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are included in the concentration group.
3. The path factors of Right View and Right Thought are included in the wisdom group.

After hearing the answer how the path factors were included by the groups of morality, *etc.*, Visākha asked another question.

### What Is Concentration and Its Sign?

Q *“Katamo panāyye, samādhi, katame dhammā samādhinimittā, katame dhammā samādhiparikkhārā, katamā samādhibhāvanā”ti? —* “Sister! What kind of phenomenon is concentration? What is the sign of concentration? What kind of phenomena are the accessories of concentration? What is it that leads to the development of concentration?”

Relating to these four profound questions, Dhammadinnā gave the following answer:

A “*Yā kho, āvuso Visākha, cittassa ekaggatā ayaṃ samādhi; cattāro satipaṭṭhānā samādhinimittā; cattāro sammappadhānā samādhiparikkhārā. Yā tesamyeva dhammānaṃ āsevanā bhāvanā bahulikammaṃ, ayaṃ ettha samādhibhāvanā*”ti. — “Friend Visākha! One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) of the mind is concentration. The four foundations of mindfulness are the sign of concentration. The four right efforts are the accessories of concentration. The repetition, development, and cultivation of these states develops concentration.”

According to the Burmese connotation, the stability or tranquility of the mind is concentration. According to Buddhist scriptures, mind is different from tranquility of the mind. According to tranquillity meditation whether the meditation object is the acquired sign (*nimitta*) of the earth device (*pathavī kasīṇa*) or the water device (*āpo kasīṇa*), or acquired signs in the category of repulsiveness (*asubha*), or mindfulness of respiration (*ānāpānasati*), or meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body, letting the mind dwell fixedly on one of these acquired signs is one-pointedness. The mind does not wander at all, but remains serene and undisturbed on a single object of consciousness. If it is the concentration of tranquillity meditation, it will remain tranquil dwelling on only one of the signs. If concentration is strong, the mind will remain fixed on the sign for five or ten minutes. If it is absorption, the mind will stay fixed for several hours. If it is extraordinarily strong, it may even remain fixed for a whole day. Some meditators being elated with concentration that contemplates only one object, think that if they contemplate the phenomena arising at every moment of seeing and hearing, the mind will go astray without gaining concentration. This is not true. The tranquility derived from tranquillity meditation is of one type, that of insight meditation is of another type. They are different from each other.

For insight meditation, all phenomena arising at every moment of seeing and hearing must be known with awareness and in an analytical way.<sup>1</sup> According to this teaching of the Buddha, all mind and matter involved in the acts of seeing and hearing, *etc.*, should be contemplated. There is nothing that should not be contemplated.

<sup>1</sup> *Sabbāṃ, bhikkhave, pariññeyyaṃ*, S.iv.29 (ed.)

Hence, all mind and matter arising through the six senses must be continually contemplated. Although a great number of objects are contemplated, concentration closely fixed on the objects amounts to fixing the mind with attentiveness on only one object. As concentration gains strength, though the objects are changing, the mind continuously remains tranquil and calm without the wandering that occurred before. This is called momentary concentration for insight. At the initial stage of contemplation before concentration becomes strong it will be noticed that the mind wanders. When contemplation gains momentum, the mind becomes stable and remains calm without wandering, dwelling fixedly on the object of contemplation. It is obvious how wandering thoughts are dispelled by concentration in accordance with the Visuddhimagga (Vism.i.85) wherein it is described as having the function of eliminating distraction (*vikkhepa-viddamaṣanaraso*). It is also clear that the mind does not incline to other objects and by remaining tranquil, it is reflected in the knowledge of contemplation. On reaching the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*), it will be found that even if the mind is allowed to move and dwell on other significant sensations, it will not stay for long. It will automatically revert to the usual object of contemplation as before, and remain calm. During the moment of the Noble Path, the mind remains absorbed in cessation only for a short while. However, as it remains calm with penetrative concentration on the nature of bliss, it may be stated as one-pointed. In the case of a person who is absorbed in the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*), the mind can remain in a state of tranquility continuously for several minutes, several hours, or even for a whole day and night.

What should be remembered is that in the case of tranquillity concentration, as a continuous series of thoughts dwell on an acquired sign (*nimitta*), it is also called continuous concentration (*pabandha-samādhī*), and the attainment of cessation is of the same nature. However, in the case of concentration for insight, a continuous series of thoughts do not dwell on one object. The mind dwells successively on each and every object only for a very brief moment, one after another. That is why concentration for insight is called momentary concentration. This has been described in the Visuddhimagga Mahāṭikā. Every time contemplation is made on the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, or on "sitting," "touching," "hearing,"



“seeing,” “knowing,” *etc.*, the continuous dwelling of the mind on the object that is contemplated and conceived is momentary concentration. By the faculty of this concentration, the matter (*rūpa*) that is known, and the knowing mind (*nāma*), are distinguished. Because of the intention to bend, bending occurs; because of the eye, seeing arises; because of the visual object it sees; and because of the presence of the object to be known, knowing occurs, *etc.* This happens because of cause and effect, which can be differentiated and known.

While contemplating, as it is noted that the new formations of mind and matter arise, followed instantaneously by dissolution, the nature of impermanence is realised. This is how insight knowledge occurs by relying on momentary concentration. This answer should be construed as referring to Path concentration, which remains constant for a short while after absorption in the consciousness of *nibbāna*.

The second answer is: “The four foundations of mindfulness are the sign of concentration. “These are: mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of thoughts, and mindfulness of mental objects. These four foundations of mindfulness are the cause that brings about mental tranquility or concentration. How it causes concentration may be stated thus: If mindfulness of respiration (*ānāpānasati*) is practised, and the breath is noted as “breathing in,” and “breathing out,” the mindfulness that is developed can lead to the attainment of the four absorptions (*rūpa-jhāna*), with access concentration, making a total of five. If the hairs of the head and body hairs, *etc.*, are contemplated, mindfulness that arises can bring forth access concentration together with the first absorption. If contemplation is carried on and noted while walking, *etc.*, as “walking” “standing,” “sitting,” “lying down,” “bending” “stretching,” and so on, momentary concentration (also called access concentration) is attained through mindfulness. If the said concentration becomes stronger, mind and matter, are distinguished as stated previously. Cause and effect are also discerned. The phenomena are also realised as impermanent, *etc.* In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta it states: “*samudayavayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim̐ viharati,*” which means that the aggregate of matter is seen as an arising phenomenon. This is how concentration is gained by practising mindfulness of the body. When insight knowledge is mature, path knowledge is achieved through mindfulness and concentration.

If the sensations of “stiffness,” “heat,” “pain,” *etc.*, are contemplated as they arise, mindfulness will bring about momentary

concentration. Contemplating with mindfulness on “imagining” or other activities of the thinking mind at every moment of their arising will bring about momentary concentration. The same will happen in the case of any other phenomena that are contemplated in the way described before. This explains how momentary concentration, insight knowledge, and path knowledge occur by practising mindfulness of feelings and thoughts. Though it may be stated that concentration is gained through mindfulness, it is not accomplished by mindfulness alone. Some accessories are also needed, which is where the third answer comes in: “The four right efforts are the accessories of concentration.”

This is how they play their part: 1) Exertion prevents unwholesome states from arising, 2) it dispels unwholesome states that have already arisen, 3) it arouses wholesome states not yet arisen, 4) it maintains and develops the wholesome states that have already arisen. This is how the four right efforts are involved every time meditation is practised cultivating the four foundations of mindfulness. While mindfulness of mind and matter is being cultivated at every moment, the effort made amounts to the four right efforts in the way described under the four right efforts. Because of exertion made during contemplation, concentration for insight is attained after gaining mindfulness. The exertion and mindfulness acquired at the moment of the Noble Path depend on exertion and mindfulness that occurred while practising insight meditation. The concentration of the Noble Path occurs because of exertion and mindfulness, so the four right efforts are said to be accessories of concentration.

The Fourth Answer was: “The repetition, development, and cultivation of these states develops concentration.” To repeat, develop, and cultivate the occurrence of exertion, mindfulness, and concentration brings about and develops concentration. There are two kinds of mental development (*bhāvanā*): 1) the development of concentration, and 2) the development of wisdom. Of these two, tranquillity meditation may also develop concentration, concentration for insight, or the concentration of the Noble Path. As the present question is a continuation of the question on the Noble Path, it is presumed that it refers to the development of Noble Path concentration. The answer given is, therefore, regarded as the answer to that. Hence, as the Noble Path concentration occurs once only at one moment, it is

difficult to explain whether it produces development, or several occurrences. In the Commentaries, however, it says to presume that during a single moment of mind-consciousness, it brings about repetition, development, and cultivates numerous occurrences. Such being the case, it is doubtful whether one should presume that repetition is made at the moment of arising phenomena, or whether development occurs in the brief interval of cessation, or whether numerous occurrences are taking place at the moment of dissolution. If that is the case, it is hardly satisfactory. According to the instructions in the Aṅguttara Commentary,<sup>1</sup> it shall be presumed that repetition is made by the second Path, and that development is caused by the third Path, and also that action or occurrence is produced several times by the fourth Path. This is more likely to be accepted as satisfactory. From another point of view, the presumption that it refers to the way that things occur at the moment of the Path by procuring the influence of repetition, *etc.*, during the process of developing concentration for insight on the preliminary path, would appear feasible. However, at the moment of developing insight by virtue of the accessories of the four right efforts together with the four foundations of mindfulness, the path factor of Right Concentration has been developed repeatedly. Every time bodily movements such as “walking,” “standing,” or “sitting,” are contemplated, mindfulness of the body is cultivated. Every time that thoughts are noted, it amounts to developing mindfulness of thoughts. Every moment of contemplating seeing, hearing, *etc.*, as “seeing,” “hearing,” *etc.*, develops mindfulness of mental-objects. The successful contemplation of these four foundations of mindfulness has been achieved because of the support of the four right efforts. It is because of these accessories with the four foundations of mindfulness, deep and tranquil concentration is achieved in respect of every object that is contemplated. When this concentration gains strength, Noble Path concentration is gained by the accessories of the Noble Path. These three are the the path factors of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, which belong to the concentration group of the the Noble Eightfold Path.

The remaining questions and answers are not easy to understand. Visākha continued with further searching questions as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> AA.iii.142, Yuganaddhasuttavaṇṇanā (ed.)

## How Many Mental Formations Are There?

Q “*Kati panāyye, saṅkhārā*”*ti.* — “Sister! How many mental formations are there?”

A “*Tayome, āvuso Visākha, saṅkhārā* — *kāyasaṅkhāro, vacisaṅkhāro, cittasaṅkhāro*”*ti.* — “Friend Visākha! There are three: bodily formations, verbal formations, and mental formations of thought.”

It is just an ordinary question. The Buddha taught that all mental formations are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*), and unsatisfactory (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha*). These impermanent and unsatisfactory mental formations are kamma, mind (*citta*), climate (*utu*), and nourishment (*āhāra*). As these are formed by the law of causation, they are mind and matter, which are effects produced by causes. These elements of sentient existence fall within the realms of sensual existence (*kāmabhava*), realms of form (*rūpabhava*), or formless realms (*arūpabhava*). Since these are phenomena concerned with existence, they are regarded as belonging to the three planes of existences (*tebhūmaka dhamma*). The nature or condition of mind and matter, therefore, deserves to be contemplated for insight.

The Law of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which teaches us that dependent on ignorance of the Four Noble Truths mental formations arise, *i.e.*, volitional activities or kamma, also teaches us that moral deeds of the sensual sphere (*kāma kusala*) and the realm of form (*rūpa kusala*), are meritorious mental formation (*puññābhisaṅkhārā*). Then immoral deeds (*akusala kamma*) are described as demeritorious mental formations (*appuññābhisaṅkhārā*). Moral deeds that cause rebirth in the formless realms (*arūpa kusala*) are imperturbable mental formations (*aneñjābhisaṅkhārā*).

Then all bodily actions (*kāya-kammaṃ*) done by one’s own volition (*cetanā*), are bodily formations (*kāya-saṅkhārā*). The mental state that causes speech (*vacī-kammaṃ*), verbal formations (*vacī-saṅkhārā*). The mental state that causes thoughts (*mano-kammaṃ*), are mental formations of thought (*citta-saṅkhārā*). Doubt is likely to arise as to what kind of mental formations were referred to in this question on mental formations. Nevertheless, Dhammadinnā, being an Arahant equipped with analytical knowledge, understood that this question related to those mental formations that were relevant to the attainment of cessation (*nirodha samāpatti*), referring to which

another question would follow. She, therefore, answered that there were three types of mental formations — bodily, verbal, and mental.

## What Are Bodily, Verbal, and Mental Formations?

Q *“Katamo paṇāyye, kāyasaṅkhāro, katamo vacīsaṅkhāro, katamo cittasaṅkhāro”ti?* — “Sister! What is bodily mental formation, what is verbal mental formation, and what is mental formation of thought?”

To this question, Dhammadinnā gave the following answer:

A *“Assāsapassāsā kho, āvuso Visākha, kāyasaṅkhāro, vitakkavicārā vacīsaṅkhāro, saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro”ti.* — “Friend Visākha! The inhalation and exhalation are bodily formations, initial and sustained application are verbal formations. Perception and feeling are mental formations.”

This question is different in essence though similar in name to the previous question about kamma. The question was put anticipating a reply regarding the nature of mental formations. The answer given by Dhammadinnā was therefore about the nature of mental formations. Visākha went on to ask why they are so named.

*“Kasmā paṇāyye, assāsapassāsā kāyasaṅkhāro, kasmā vitakkavicārā vacīsaṅkhāro, kasmā saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro”ti.*

To this query, Dhammadinnā responded as follows:

*“Assāsapassāsā kho, āvuso Visākha, kāyikā ete dhammā kāyappaṭibaddhā, tasmā assāsapassāsā kāyasaṅkhāro. Pubbe kho, āvuso Visākha, vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācaṃ bhindati, tasmā vitakkavicārā vacīsaṅkhāro. Saññā ca vedanā ca cetasikā ete dhammā cittappaṭibaddhā, tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro”ti.*

“Friend Visākha! The inhalation and exhalation of the breath arises in the body and is connected with or dependent on the body. That is why the inhaling and exhaling breath are called bodily formations.

“Friend Visākha! Forming an idea before speaking is initial application (*vitakka*). After reflecting, an investigation is made regarding how an idea should be expressed. Then only words follow to say something, which is sustained

application (*vicāra*). Therefore, initial and sustained application are called verbal formations.

“Friend Visākha! Perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*) arise by depending on mental formations (*cetasikā*) of thought. Since perception and feeling arise together with the thoughts that emanate from the mind, they are concomitant with the mind. Hence, perception and feeling are called mental formations.”

It must be presumed that all other mental formations with the exception of initial and sustained application are included in mental formations of thought (*citta-saṅkhārā*). Forty-eight other mental formations (*cetasikā*) are included in the aggregate of mental formations, and these should also be regarded as mental formations of thought. Therefore, it has been pointed out in the Saṅkhārayamaka of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka as: “*Saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro, thapetvā vitakkavicāre sabbepi cittasampayuttakā dhammā cittasaṅkhāro.*” In this regard, as the question is to be put in relation to the attainment of cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*), it may be taken as thirty-four kinds of mental formations that are instrumental in producing merits in Non-returners and Arahants. When this dialogue on these difficult points of Dhamma took place, it seems likely that the Abhidhamma teachings had not yet been expounded. Despite this, the ability to clarify those three kinds of mental formations, which are highly profound, is immensely praiseworthy. Nowadays, there will be only a few among those well-versed in the Tipiṭaka who may be able to tackle these difficult questions without consulting the texts. Even in the Commentaries, where exposition is made relating to these three kinds of formations, the Cūḷavedalla Sutta is cited as an authority. So the answer given by Dhammadinnā is, without doubt, extremely profound, comprehensive, and dependable. Visākha proceeded with a question on the attainment of cessation.

## What is the Cessation of Perception and Feeling?

Q “*Kathaṃ panāyye, saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpatti hotī’ti.* — “Sister! How does the cessation of perception and feeling occur?”

In brief, it was asked how one who attained cessation gained it and how the mind and mental formations reached the point of cessation. This question was asked to find out if Dhammadinnā

had ever achieved cessation, and whether she was able to accomplish it at will. The answer given by Dhammadinnā was as follows:

A “*Na kho, āvuso Visākha, saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjantassa bhikkhuno evaṃ hoti — Ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjissā’nti vā, ‘Ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjāmi’ti vā, ‘Ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno’ti vā. Atha kho’ssa pubbeva tathā cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ hoti yaṃ taṃ tathattāya upaneti’ti.* — “Friend Visākha! Such thoughts do not arise in a monk<sup>1</sup> who has attained cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*) as: “I will enter into the cessation of perception and feeling,” or “I am entering into the cessation of perception and feeling,” or “I have entered the cessation of perception and feeling.”

The semi-consciousness state is called “neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatanaṃ*). When this consciousness ceases, it reaches the stage of cessation of the knowing mind. On reaching that stage, while the mind is still in a semi-conscious state, it does not occur to him that he is about to attain cessation. When this semi-consciousness mind ceases, neither does it occur to him that the stage or condition of cessation, has been attained. Then when it reaches that stage, he is not conscious of the fact that he has attained it. If that is so, what happens is that in the case of a monk who remains absorbed in the attainment of cessation, insight consciousness with which absorption is contemplated along with the absorption consciousness that will cause cessation of the knowing mind, has arisen in him even before entering into the attainment of cessation. The mind that produces such consciousness is instrumental in bringing about fulfilment of his desire as primarily intended.

Even the plain meaning of that answer in Pāli cannot easily be grasped by an ordinary lay person. It may be simply stated that it is practically difficult to acquire personal experience of how cessation is attained by mental absorption. It has been explained just for the purpose of imparting general knowledge to enable one to have faith in and respect for the Buddha’s teaching. Only Non-returners and Arahants can gain this absorption, a state induced by ecstatic meditation. Absorption in the attainment of cessation can be achieved only by a person who has attained all eight stages of absorption — *rūpa* and *arūpa jhāna*. Non-returners and Arahants who are fully

<sup>1</sup> In this passage, though the teaching is expounded for a monk, it would be equally applicable to a nun or a layperson who was a Non-returner.

endowed with the eight absorptions, if they wish to experience the blissful tranquility of nibbāna, must first of all enter into the first absorption, which means to concentrate one's mind on a single object, then become mindful of the cessation of *jhāna* and absorbed deeply in the ecstatic state of mind. As originally intended, absorption is attained for a few seconds or a few minutes and when it ceases, this ecstatic mind must be contemplated according to the method of insight, noting its characteristics of impermanence and so on.

This is similar to the knowledge gained by meditators here after contemplating and noting the mind that arises. After contemplating as stated, the second *jhāna* should be gained. When this *jhāna* consciousness ceases, contemplation on this second ecstatic mind should be done. Similarly, the third *jhāna* should be gained and contemplated. The fourth *jhāna* must likewise be gained and then contemplated. Similarly, the absorptions on the infinity of space (*ākāsañāṇicāyatanaṃ*), the infinity of consciousness (*viññāṇañāṇicāyatanaṃ*), and nothingness (*ākīraṇāññāyatanaṃ*) must be gained and contemplated with insight. This means developing absorption and insight in pairs. Thereafter, a few things remain for which vows need to be made. Such details are not required for the audience and will, therefore, be omitted. Finally, the absorption on neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatanaṃ*) must be gained. This ecstatic state of mind is something like the semi-conscious mind just before falling asleep. It is a very feeble mind. After one or two occurrences of this ecstatic mind, no consciousness whatsoever arises and then, the mind totally comes to a cessation. This is how cessation is attained.

During the period of absorption in cessation, all feelings cease. Consciousness entirely ceases, that is, there is no consciousness (something like falling into a state of coma). During that period of absorption, no harm or danger from any fire or lethal weapon or arms can occur. The duration may be for a few minutes, a few hours, or up to seven days as predetermined. When the intended period comes to an end, consciousness will arise again as usual. This is called arising from the absorption on cessation. How it so arises will be further asked and answered. Now that it appears sufficient enough to understand roughly how mental absorption in cessation occurs.

Following the above answer, Visākha proceeded to ask further question as follows:



- Q *“Saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjantassa panāyye, bhikkhuno katame dhammā paṭhamaṃ nirujjhanti — yadi vā kāyasaṅkhāro, yadi vā vacīsaṅkhāro, yadi vā cittasaṅkhāro”ti. — “Sister! What kind of formations cease first in one who attains the cessation of perception and feeling — bodily formations, verbal formations, or mental formations?”*

Dhammadinnā’s answer to the above question was:

*“Saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjantassa kho, āvuso Visākha, bhikkhuno paṭhamaṃ nirujjhati vacīsaṅkhāro, tato kāyasaṅkhāro, tato cittasaṅkhāro”ti.*

“Friend Visākha! In one who attains cessation, verbal formations cease first, then bodily formations, then mental formations.”

From the time of absorption in the second *jhāna*, a person who is mentally absorbed in cessation is free from verbal formations, *i.e.*, initial and sustained application. At the time of absorption in the fourth *jhāna*, he is free from bodily formations, *i.e.*, inhalation and exhalation. When absorbed in the state of neither perception nor non-perception, the mental formations, *i.e.*, perception and feeling, cease. For this reason it is stated that verbal formations cease first, then bodily formations, then mental formations. This is the answer. (However, the cessation of verbal formations refers to the arising of *jhāna*, and while contemplating for insight, it is unlikely that the cessation of initial and sustained application would occur.

Next, Visākha questioned Dhammadinnā about how emerging from absorption in cessation occurs in the following words:

- Q *“Kathaṃ panāyye, saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhānaṃ hoti”ti.*

Dhammadinnā answered as follows:

- A *“Na kho, āvuso Visākha, saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahantassa bhikkhuno evaṃ hoti — ‘Ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahissa’nti vā, ‘Ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhāmi’ti vā, ‘Ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhito’ti vā. Atha khvāssa pubbeva tathā cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ hoti yaṃ taṃ tathattāya upaneti”ti. — “Friend Visākha! Such thoughts do not arise in a monk who has attained cessation as: “I will emerge*

from the cessation of perception and feeling,” or “I am emerging from the cessation of perception and feeling,” or “I have emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling. Before attaining cessation, he resolved that consciousness should reappear after a predetermined period.”

In the case of a Non-returner, when the predetermined period expires, the Fruition consciousness of Non-returning occurs. In the case of an Arahant, the Fruition consciousness of Arahantship occurs. From then onwards, reflections, *etc.*, will arise. This is how emergence from the attainment of cessation occurs.

Visākha then asked a further question relating to the sequence of occurrence of the three kinds of formations:

Q “*Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahantassa paṇāyye, bhikkhuno katame dhammā paṭhamam uppajjanti — yadi vā kāyasaṅkhāro, yadi vā vacīsaṅkhāro, yadi vā cittasaṅkhāro*”ti. — “Sister! What kind of formations occur first after a bhikkhu emerges from the cessation of perception and feeling, is it bodily, verbal, or mental formations?”

Dhammadinnā answered:

A “*Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahantassa kho, āvuso Visākha, bhikkhuno paṭhamam uppajjati cittasaṅkhāro, tato kāyasaṅkhāro, tato vacīsaṅkhāro*”ti. — “When a bhikkhu emerges from the cessation of perception and feeling, mental formations arise first, then bodily formations, then verbal formations.”

When arising from the attainment of cessation, the fruition consciousness of Non-returning, or the fruition consciousness of Arahantship begins to occur. As this consciousness should have occurred in conjunction with the fourth *jhāna*, no opportunity occurs for inhalation. It is without initial and sustained application. However, mental formations such as perception and feeling will occur. Therefore, mental formations of thought occur first. Thereafter, inhalation also occurs from the moment of the arising of sub-conscious mind. At the time of arising of this sub-conscious mind, as it is not conducive to speech, despite the inclusion of initial and sustained application, it cannot be said that verbal formations have occurred yet. The answer is that only after that, do verbal formations occur.

Just as it cannot be said that verbal formations occur at the moment of the arising of the sub-conscious mind, if the answer is taken to mean that verbal formations cease at the moment of insight when no words are spoken in order to absorb into the attainment of cessation, the answer given earlier is considered satisfactory. Visākha, then delved deeper in with a further question on contact.

Q *“Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitam panāyye, bhikkhum kati phassā phusantī”ti. — “Sister! When a bhikkhu emerges from the cessation of perception and feeling, how many kinds of contact occur?”*

To this question, Dhammadinnā answered as follows:

A *“Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitam kho, āvuso Visākha, bhikkhum tayo phassā phusanti — suññato phasso, animitto phasso, appaṇihito phasso”ti. — “Friend Visākha. When a bhikkhu emerges from the cessation of perception and feeling, three kinds of contact occur — voidness, signlessness, or desirelessness.”*

It has already been stated that the attainment of fruition occurs first when arising from cessation. Being free from passion, *etc.*, it is also called voidness (*suññata*). As it is free of the sign of passion (*rāga-nimitta*), one of the attributes of sentient existence, it is also known as signlessness (*animitta*). Moreover, as it is free from passionate desire such it is also called desirelessness (*appaṇihita*). So contact that is included in this attainment is also known as void, signless, and desireless. As contact occurs by dwelling on nibbāna, which is known as the void (*suññatā*), unconditioned, and desireless, with attentive consciousness of mind, it is called voidness.

The answer, therefore, is that the three kinds of contact, voidness, signlessness, and desirelessness, occur first. For better understanding, it may be stated that when emerging from the attainment of cessation, contact occurs with nibbāna, a condition devoid of defilements, to which the mind has been directed as its sense-object. Contact is also made with nibbāna which is devoid of any sign. Then comes mere awareness of contact with nibbāna, a condition free from passionate desire, which is the sense-object that has been contemplated.

Then Visākha asked how the mind made its inclination.

Q *“Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa panāyye, bhikkhuno kiṃninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti kiṃpoṇaṃ kiṃpabbhāra”nti.* — In brief, the query is: “Just at the moment of emerging from the attainment of cessation, to what does the mind incline?”

The answer given by Dhammadinnā was as follows:

A *“Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa kho, āvuso Visākha, bhikkhuno vivekaninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti, vivekaṇoṇaṃ vivekapabbhāra”nti.* — This means that one who has just emerged from cessation, after reflecting upon nibbāna (the cessation of mind and matter) the mind is mentally inclined towards that nibbāna.

It resembles the mind of a person who longs for a cool place from on reaching a place where the sun is oppressive. Or, it is like the mind of a person who remembers a quiet place of solitude on reaching a place full of noise and frantic activity. In the same way, a person who has arisen from cessation, a state free from all the suffering of mental formations, on finding himself enveloped in the suffering caused by the physical and mental phenomena of physical existence, becomes inclined with reverence towards nibbāna, a blissful state where suffering and misery come to cessation. Therefore, Arahants who have arisen from the attainment of fruition of cessation, eulogize the supreme qualities of nibbāna, a blissful state free from passion.

*“Susukhaṃ vata nibbānaṃ, sammāsambuddhadesitaṃ.  
Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, yattha dukkhaṃ nirujjhati”ti.*<sup>1</sup>

It means: “This nibbāna is a state in all kinds of misery and suffering cease. It is an exalted state where woes, worries, and aversion are absent. It is a state in which all the defilements that ignite the flame of human passion become utterly extinguished. It is a condition free from all kinds of dangers, confusion, and tribulations thereby bringing absolute happiness, peace and tranquility. Oh, how extremely peaceful, serene, and blissful is this state of nibbāna, as taught by the Fully Enlightened, Omniscient Buddha!”

When Dhammadinnā answered these profound questions, she has not long been a bhikkhuni, perhaps not yet even one month. Nevertheless, from her own insight knowledge personally acquired through practical meditation, she was able to answer clearly and

<sup>1</sup> Thag. v 227, Bākulatheragāthā.

precisely all of the questions put forward by Visākha. Having heard and understood the remarkable answers explained so effectively how absorption in the attainment of cessation is gained, how it is maintained, and how emergence from cessation occurs, it is probable that his faith and devotion to the Buddha's teaching will be greatly enhanced. How excellent it is to have such an unshaken faith and piousness in the Buddhist religion, bearing in mind the rare ability and gifted wisdom of Dhammadinnā in being able to clarify with precision as stated above! I wish that all those listening to this discourse can develop undying faith in the Buddha's teaching and practise it with diligence and vigour. Being highly satisfied with and rejoicing in the answers given by Dhammadinnā, Visākha continued with another question concerning feelings.

### Questions and Answers on Feelings

- Q *"Kati panāyye, vedanā"ti. "Sister! How many kinds of feelings are there?"*
- A *"Tisso kho imā, āvuso Visākha, vedanā — sukhā vedanā, dukkhā vedanā, adukkhamasukhā vedanā"ti. "Friend Visākha! There are three kinds of feelings — pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and neutral feelings."*
- Q *"Katamā panāyye, sukhā vedanā, katamā dukkhā vedanā, katamā adukkhamasukhā vedanā"ti. "Sister! What are pleasant feelings, what are painful feeling, and what are neutral feelings?"*
- A *"Yaṃ kho, āvuso Visākha, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā sukhaṃ sātaṃ vedayitaṃ — ayaṃ sukhā vedanā. Yaṃ kho, āvuso Visākha, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā dukkhaṃ asātaṃ vedayitaṃ — ayaṃ dukkhā vedanā. Yaṃ kho, āvuso Visākha, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā neva sātaṃ nāsātaṃ vedayitaṃ — ayaṃ adukkhamasukhā vedanā"ti. "Friend Visākha! Whatever mental or physical sensation is agreeable, that is pleasant feeling. Whatever mental or physical sensation is disagreeable, that is unpleasant feeling. Whatever mental or physical sensation is neither agreeable nor disagreeable, that is neutral feeling."*

Regarding the three kinds of feelings, it is obvious that the meditators here know them very well through practical meditation experience. Disagreeable bodily sensations of stiffness are painful feelings (*dukkhā vedanā*). At the beginning of contemplation, such

disagreeable sensations can be numerous. Pleasurable sensations of touch are pleasant feelings (*sukhā vedanā*). One feels it is nice, pleasant, and agreeable to enjoy a cool breeze when feeling hot. When the weather is cold, it is nice to touch something warm. It feels good to touch soft and fine clothing. When such a contact is made, the agreeable sensations are called pleasant feelings. Happiness derived from the consciousness of pleasant sensations is pleasant feeling.

Feeling miserable, sad, anxious, fearful, *etc.*, are all mental suffering and these are painful feelings. Sensations that are neither pleasurable nor painful, *i.e.*, equanimous or indifferent, is neutral feeling. Such neutral sensations in the physical body are very common. However, these neutral physical and mental sensations are not very conspicuous. They are delicate, subtle, and difficult to know. Nevertheless, in the process of contemplating on pleasant and unpleasant sensations with deep concentration when the difference between pleasant and unpleasant sensations is indistinct then neutral feelings occur.

When contemplation is making good progress, the mind becomes jubilant and enthusiastic. Particularly, at the initial stage of the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), while it is immature this jubilant state of mind usually goes to extremes. This joyous state of mental happiness is pleasant feeling. When this knowledge of arising and passing away matures and when knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*) and knowledge of equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) are reached, neutral feelings generally occur along with awareness. It seems that this vivid account of the three feelings is adequate enough to be well convinced.

- Q *“Sukhā panāyye, vedanā kiṃsukhā kiṃdukkhā, dukkhā vedanā kiṃsukhā kiṃdukkhā, adukkhamasukhā vedanā kiṃsukhā kiṃdukkhā”*ti. “Sister! What kind of happiness occurs in pleasant feelings, what kind of suffering occurs in painful feelings, what kind of happiness and suffering occurs in neutral feelings?”
- A *“Sukhā kho, āvuso Visākha, vedanā t̥hitisukhā vipariṇāmadukkhā; dukkhā vedanā t̥hitidukkhā vipariṇāmasukhā; adukkhamasukhā vedanā ñāṇasukhā aññāṇadukkhā”*ti. “Friend Visākha! The mere presence of pleasant feeling brings happiness. While it present, happiness prevails. When it changes and disappears, that is

suffering. The mere presence of painful feeling brings suffering. While it is present, suffering prevails. When it changes or disappears, that is happiness. Knowing neutral feeling is happiness. Not knowing it is suffering.”

Whether happiness occurs because of pleasurable feelings arising from physical sensations, or whether mental happiness arises because of some thought that invokes delight, everything appears well and good. If and when such pleasant feelings disappear, one becomes uneasy, then suffering can occur. For instance, if one lives with and enjoys the company of those who are dear, then there is happiness. If a close friend goes away, perhaps due to some dispute, or if he or she has died, then one is affected and disturbed in both body and mind. In particular, in the case of a couple, if they live together in harmony, they are happy. However, if they are incompatible, or their relationship results in betrayal, desertion, or divorce, or if one of them dies, bitter disappointment occurs accompanied by grief, dejection, and suffering. Similarly, if a person is rich and prosperous without any financial worries, happiness prevails. If a person is deprived of his or her property by destruction or other causes, the misery may be intense.

If pleasant feelings arise while seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching, happiness is gained. Depression or discontent are felt in the absence of pleasurable sense-objects. Therefore, Dhammadinnā in reply said, “While pleasurable feelings are present, there is happiness. If it changes or disappears, suffering occurs.”

Since this is so, physical and mental happiness are not real happiness. Such happiness is not dependable. In the absence of such happiness, passionate desire arises, while feeling uncomfortable, dissatisfied, and extremely miserable.

In regard to painful feelings, its mere presence is suffering. As long as it is present, there is suffering. On the other hand, if it disappears, then happiness emerges. Suffering occurs while sensations arise due to contact with stiffness, heat, pain, aching, itching, *etc.* Physical suffering, anxiety, sorrow, lamentation, *etc.*, are miserable whenever they occur. If such unpleasant sensations disappear, then happiness returns.

As regards neutral feelings, they bring happiness when knowing occurs. If there is no such knowing or awareness, suffering occurs.

It is rather difficult to explain this answer. In the Commentaries, it has been clarified that neutral feeling is to know the nature of things (*jānanabhāvo*) or knowing is to be happy, and that not knowing (*ajānanabhāvo*) is suffering. In this context, it is hard to be sure if “knowing” and “not knowing” are derived from “knowledge,” or whether they are meant to convey the ordinary sense of the terms.

According to what has been stated in the Subcommentary, if knowing or realisation occurs by means of insight, the knowledge of arising and passing away will occur and then happiness arises; and if it is not known or realised, then suffering occurs. In other words, if knowledge appears in conjunction with it, neutral feelings bring happiness and causes agreeable feelings dependent on that knowledge. If it does not occur in conjunction with knowledge, and instead, is accompanied by delusion, and if unwholesome indifference (*akusala upekkhā*) occurs depending on that delusion, it causes suffering.

This is difficult for the ordinary lay person to understand. What I feel with satisfaction is that “while pleasant feeling is present, there is happiness, and if it is not present, suffering occurs. On the other hand, while painful feeling is present, there is suffering and if it is absent, happiness occurs. Just as it can be easily understood by ordinary people, the statement: “Neutral feeling if known, causes happiness, and if not known, causes suffering,” is considered as one that can be easily appreciated by the people in general. What it means is that while neutral feeling is occurring, if it is known by mindfulness as a condition that remains constant with mental and physical ease, there is happiness. As physical and mental suffering is likely to occur if it is not known due to failing to pay attention, suffering may occur.

This is what I assume, and it can be easily comprehensible to those who have not had the practical experience in contemplation. The statement: “If it occurs accompanied by knowledge, happiness occurs dependent on that knowledge, or if not, suffering arises,” is also difficult to understand. It is, therefore, necessary to simply remember that while neutral feeling is occurring, if the condition of ease and comfort pervading the body and mind is known, it is happiness, and if not known, it is suffering.

Visākha then proceeded with another question about how defilements depend on the three kinds of feelings.



## How Do Defilements Depend on Feelings?

Q *“Sukhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ anusayo anuseti, dukkhāya vedanāya kiṃ anusayo anuseti, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya kiṃ anusayo anuseti”*ti. — “Sister! What kind of latent tendency lies dormant in pleasant feeling, what kind lies dormant in painful feeling, and what kind lies dormant in neutral feeling?”

Latent tendency (*anusaya*) means something that readily occurs when circumstances permit. Dhammadinnā’s answer was:

A *“Sukhāya kho, āvuso Visākha, vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti”*ti. — “Friend Visākha! The latent tendency to lust lies dormant in pleasant feeling. The latent tendency to aversion lies dormant in painful feeling. The latent tendency to ignorance lies dormant in neutral feeling.”

If pleasant feelings arising from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and imagining are not truly realised as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self, due to failing to contemplate them, lust (*rāga*) is deemed to lie dormant in that pleasant feeling. If one reflects on that pleasant feeling, attachment can occur repeatedly. The possibility of occurrence of such attachment may be stated as lying dormant in the latent tendency to lust. If any kind of painful feeling, such as physical pain, stiffness, aching, *etc.*, or mental pain such as dejection, sorrow, unhappiness, distress, or depression, which has arisen from unpleasant sense-objects, is not realised in it truly as impermanent, *etc.*, due to failing to contemplate them, then aversion (*paṭigha*) will lie dormant in that painful feeling. This aversion, which tends to produce resentment and treachery, can occur repeatedly after reflecting on painful and disagreeable sensations.

How the latent tendencies to lust and aversion lie dormant in feelings is described in The Book of Analysis (Vbh 340).

*“Yaṃ loke piyarūpaṃ sātārūpaṃ ettha sattānaṃ rāgānusayo anuseti.  
Yaṃ loke appiyarūpaṃ asātārūpaṃ ettha sattānaṃ paṭighānusayo anuseti.”*

It is as explained below:

All things in this world of sentient beings, have the natural tendency to inspire affection and pleasure. The latent tendency to lust

lies dormant in lovable and pleasant feelings. Unpleasant and undesirable things also exist in the universe. The latent tendency to aversion rests upon or lies in all such unpleasant and repulsive feelings. If the truth of impermanence is not known due to failing to contemplate pleasant feelings, desire and attachment to these desirable things can occur repeatedly. The possibility of such occurrence is said to lie dormant in lovable and pleasant feelings. If ugly sights, or unpleasant sounds *etc.*, are not contemplated and known as impermanent *etc.*, then aversion can repeatedly occur after reflecting on such feelings. The possibility of such occurrences is said to be lie dormant in unpleasant and repulsive things. Pleasant feelings (*sukhavedanā*) are included in lovable and pleasurable things. Hence, the statement that the latent tendency to lust depends on pleasant feelings conveys the same sense as the statement that it depends on pleasant things.

Painful feelings are included in bad and unpleasant things. To put it in another way they occur depending on unpleasant things. So the statements that the latent tendency to aversion depends on painful feelings, and that it depends on unpleasant things, convey the same meaning.

If the truth is not known due to failing to contemplate neutral feelings (*upekkhāvedanā*), ignorance (*avijjā*), which wrongly conceives such feelings as permanent, pleasant, and self, can occur repeatedly after reflection. The possibility of such occurrences means the latent tendency to ignorance. This is how latent tendency to ignorance depends on neutral feelings. The explanation given in the Vibhaṅga is that ignorance, which wrongly conceives sensations as permanent, *etc.*, is included in lust and aversion. The arising of lust and aversion is caused by ignorance, which wrongly conceives things as lovable or hateful. Therefore, it may be stated that ignorance, mixing with lust and aversion, depends on pleasant and unpleasant feelings — on which lust and aversion also depend. If so, it is not in agreement with the answer that the latent tendency to ignorance depends on neutral feelings. However, to make them fall in line, it must be construed that the way that the latent tendency to ignorance depends on neutral feelings merely indicates how the three kinds of defilements depend in their own distinctive way. Ignorance is included when the basic factor of lust depends on pleasant feelings. It seems appropriate to assume that ignorance is also included when the salient factor of aversion depends

on painful feelings. It is because every time feelings of greed (*lobha*) and anger (*dosa*) arise, they occur together with delusion (*moḥa*).

In the Pāli text referred to, though the neutral feeling relevant to equanimity is not shown, the two feelings — pleasant and unpleasant are disclosed. Nevertheless, it can safely be presumed that the two feelings — the inferior type of pleasant feeling, and the other — the inferior type of unpleasant feeling — should be the neutral feeling that is concerned with equanimity. It is because passion and anger can arise depending upon ignorance, which wrongly conceives the feelings as being really pleasant or unpleasant, though in fact the feeling is really neither pleasant nor unpleasant. To some people, however, greed and delusion, *etc.*, could arise in conjunction with equanimous feelings in feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. If it taken to mean that the latent tendency to ignorance rests on equanimity, which has occurred as stated, it may be said that there is no discrepancy between this Sutta and the Vibhaṅga. Furthermore, it has been described in the Vibhaṅga as hereinafter mentioned that the three latent tendencies of conceit (*māna*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*), are together resting upon and included in ignorance (*avijjā*).

It should be remembered that the latent tendencies to conceit and ignorance rest in the same place. It should be borne in mind that wrong view and doubt also rest in the same place as ignorance. In view of this explanation, the three latent defilements of conceit, wrong view, and doubt are deemed to have rested together upon the sensation in which ignorance itself lies. This means that they all mingle and occur together. If contemplation cannot be made on the clearly manifested feeling that arises in the act of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, and if the truth of impermanence is not realised, then ignorance wrongly perceives it as being permanent, pleasurable, and as a self. Conceit, wrong view, and doubt can also occur in that misperceived feeling.

## How Are Latent Tendencies Rejected?

Latent tendencies (*anusaya*) are of two kinds: latent in the object (*ārammaṇanusaya*), and inherited (*santānānusaya*). Latent in the object means: "If impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self is not truly realised due to not contemplating the manifested sensation of mind and matter arising from the six sense organs, then latent sensual desire (*kāmarāganusaya*) and latent desire for existence (*bhavarāganusaya*) may

arise under favourable circumstances, after reflection. This may be called “resting on.” Again, the latent tendency to ignorance (*avijjānusaya*)— which wrongly conceives the falsely known sensation as permanent, pleasurable, and self — can arise. Because of this ignorance, the latent tendencies to aversion, conceit, wrong view, and doubt can occur due to the falsely known sensation. Such an occurrence may be called “rested upon.” It is known as latent in the object because defilements, which may have the opportunity to occur, have arisen. This latent tendency can be rejected or dispelled by the faculty of insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) derived from contemplation. Insight meditation is practised with this objective in mind.

The inherited latent tendencies (*santānānusaya*) includes the six defilements of lust (*rāga*), anger or ill-will (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit or pride (*māna*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*), which have not yet been eliminated by the Noble Path, still have the chance to occur. Lust is of two kinds, namely sensual desire and desire for existence. These seven are called latent tendencies (*anusaya*). In the case of a worldling (*puthujjana*), any of these seven latent tendencies can occur when circumstances so conspire. It may, therefore, be stated that these seven latent tendencies reside in the personality of a worldling. Since wrong view and doubt have been eliminated by a Stream-winner, only the other five remain.

The path of Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-magga*) can only eliminate coarse forms of lust and ill-will. The finer or subtle forms exist as before. So it may be said that the five latent tendencies reside in the personality of a Once-returner.

A Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) has become entirely free from lust and ill-will by virtue of the third path. Only three latent tendencies — desire for existence, conceit and ignorance can be said to reside in a Non-returner.

All latent and other kinds of defilements have been completely uprooted in an Arahant. Therefore, in the personality of an Arahant, all fetters are entirely eradicated.

As stated above, since no rejection of defilements has yet been made by the Noble Path, lust, *etc.*, which can occur in an individual, are known as inherited tendencies (*santanānusaya*). In this context, an individual (*puggala*) means the seven Noble Ones who are still practising insight meditation on the path to final liberation. However, in the personality

of persons who have attained the path, as the path-consciousness occurs only momentarily, no defilements whatsoever will have the opportunity to occur. Only in the consciousness of the Stream-winner, Once-returner, and Non-Returner, the five or three latent defilements relevant to them respectively will have the chance to occur. Such being the case, an individual may be identified with these three Noble Ones who have attained the lower states of the three fruits.

Latent in the object means those seven, five, or three latent defilements of the inherited tendencies that can occur in objects that have escaped contemplation. That is defilements that can occur under favourable circumstances in objects that are not known as they really are due to being unable to contemplate them as impermanent, *etc.*, at the moment of seeing, hearing, and contacting, though defilements may have not yet taken place. In this connection, a noteworthy story<sup>1</sup> from Sri Lanka may be quoted:—

At one time, a young monk went to a monastery by the name of [Kāladighavāpi Vihāra](#), and applied for admission to a course of study. The presiding Sayādaw seems to possess supernormal knowledge (*abhiññā*). Reflecting on the affairs of this young monk, he saw in his mind's eye the danger that might befall him. He, therefore, stipulated a condition that he would accept him as a student only if the young monk undertook to refrain from going around the village for alms. The young monk gave his solemn undertaking and was admitted. After the completion of the course of study and on the eve of his return, he paid homage to his teacher. Then, he thought to himself, “Why wasn't I permitted to go out for alms in the village? Having refrained from going for alms in the village as promised, I have fulfilled my undertaking.” Reflecting that he should now go to the village, he went to the village for almsfood. He arrived at a house where he found an adorable young woman, dressed in a bright yellow sari. On seeing the young monk, the young woman was infatuated and then, prompted by ardent love and attachment, she offered porridge and poured it into his almsbowl. After offering the food, the young woman, being stricken with love and attachment retreated to her room and lay in bed. It seems to be a coincidence due to past kamma! The young woman's parents asked their daughter why she confined herself to bed. She answered that she had done so because

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<sup>1</sup> MA.i.353f.

she was sorely affected by boundless love and attachment for the young monk who had just visited the house for alms and that if she were not permitted to live together with the young monk, she would surely die. The young woman being their only daughter, the parents had bestowed their loving care and attention to the utmost, satisfying all her wants and wishes. Her father, therefore, hurried to the young monk and extended an invitation to visit their house again and accept the offer of a meal. However, the young monk declined the invitation. The girl's father then recounted what had happened to his daughter the day before, and further mentioned that they had enough wealth, and that the girl was their only daughter. Moreover, he urged the young monk to live with them happily and again invited him to visit their home saying that they would treat him as their own elder son. However, on that occasion, as the young monk had no attachment, he declined the proposal and departed. The parents reported back to their daughter that they were not successful in enticing the young monk to their home and solaced her by saying that they could find any other eligible boy to her liking. They told her not to be disappointed and persuaded her to resume her normal diet as before. It was of no avail and the girl became bed-ridden, denying all food and water because of mental distress over her unrequited love. Seven days later she passed away while sleeping in her own bed.

After the funeral and burial rites were over, her parents took the yellow sari that she had worn, and offered it to the Sayādaw at the monastery. The monk cut the sari into several pieces and distributed it among the monks. An elderly monk sent one of the cut pieces of this yellow cloth which he had obtained and sent it to the young monk through a messenger for making use of it as a strainer. The young monk inquired from where this piece of cloth was obtained. Then, after having heard the full tragic account relating to this piece of cloth, he pondered upon the incident thus: "Alas! What a tragedy. How lamentable it is to lose the chance of a happy married life as the husband of such an adorable girl who is intoxicated with love and affection for me." He succumbed to death on the spot, his heart broken and burnt by the lustful fires of passionate desire (*rāga*).

This story shows that no attachment had occurred to the young monk when he first met her. He was not yet interested in her even when the girl's parents had persuaded him. However, at the time when he first

saw and heard her, he had not been able to contemplate on what was seen and heard and had failed to realise them truly as impermanent, which in consequence, allowed the attractive image of the girl attired in a bright yellow sari to get imprinted on his mind with attachment. At the last moment, the mind lingering on this mental image with passion and dejection (*domanassa*) had arisen, causing him to suffer till death. This is the way in which the occurrence of defilements latent in the object took place having clearly dwelt on the sense-object. Thereafter, the following questions were raised by Visākha the millionaire.

Q *“Sabbāya nu kho, ayye, sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti”*ti? — “Sister! Does the latent tendency to lust rest upon all pleasant feelings? Does the latent tendency to aversion rest upon all painful feelings? Does the latent tendency to ignorance rest upon all neutral feelings?”

A *“Na kho, āvuso Visākha, sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, na sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, na sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti”*ti. — “No, friend Visākha. The latent tendency to lust does not rest upon all pleasant feelings. The latent tendency to aversion does not rest upon all painful feelings. The latent tendency to ignorance does not rest upon all neutral feelings.”

The question then arises, if latent tendency to lust does not rest upon all pleasant feelings, then on what kind of pleasant feelings does it rest and on what kind of pleasant feelings does it not rest? Similar questions could be posed regarding painful and neutral feelings. However, no further query was made by Visākha who seemed to have fully grasped the meaning of the answers. Though there were no further queries and answers, in the Commentary it has been clarified that the expression, “The latent tendency to lust does not rest upon all pleasant feelings,” means: “It is not that the latent tendency to lust should not be rejected in all pleasant feelings.”

By this explanation, it may be understood that “The latent tendency to lust has already been rejected,” refers to pleasant feelings that have been realised or known as impermanent, *etc.*, through insight contemplation. It should, therefore, be clear that the latent tendency to lust stays apart and does not rest upon pleasant feelings that have already been

distinctly known. The Commentary further explains that the expression “should not be rejected,” means “rested upon latent tendencies, which ought not to have been rejected and which, therefore, may be said to be resting upon.” Where there has been no distinct knowledge of impermanence, *etc.*, regarding the falsely known object, it cannot possibly occupy a place in the dhamma that should be distinctly known through insight. The gist as explained in the Visuddhimagga<sup>1</sup> is that latent defilements rest upon mind and matter that have not been contemplated and realised by insight knowledge. It means that it does not rest upon the dhamma that has been realised or known. That is why it should be understood that in all feelings that are known through insight knowledge, the latent tendency to lust does not rest at all. At this meditation centre insight meditation is being practised beginning with the contemplation on the rising and falling movements of the abdomen and then on every act of seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing, to realise the truth of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self in respect of all those phenomena that have arisen from the six sense doors. This is to prevent the latent tendency of lust, *etc.*, from “resting upon” those mental and physical phenomena, and to prevent their occurrence. In particular, contemplation should be made to free oneself from the latent tendencies of wrong view and doubt. When contemplation gains full strength, wrong view and doubt will become extremely weak. At that moment, the Path of Stream-winning will arise. Thereafter, wrong view and doubt will cease to occur and will be entirely eradicated. One will then be free from the powerful forms of sensual desire, *etc.*, that can cause one to descend to the four lower realms. Hence, a Stream-winner has escaped from the four lower realms.

After reaching the stage of Stream-winning if contemplation is continued with full vigour, the Path of Once-returning will arise when the coarser types of lust and ill-will lose their strength and will be entirely eliminated by this Path. When contemplation is continued further, even the very subtle forms of lust and ill-will will become weak. This will bring the meditator to the Path of Non-returning, where all lust and ill-will become totally extinct. If contemplation is continued further, the Path of Arahantship is reached, then the latent tendencies of desire for existence, conceit, and ignorance, and any remaining defilements will cease to occur. Everyone has to contemplate with

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<sup>1</sup> Vism. 688.



sustained effort aspiring to become an Arahant in whom all defilements have become extinct. If the defilements are completely extirpated, all suffering will come to an end and happiness will prevail. Visākha then proceeded to ask how the latent tendencies are abandoned.

### Rejecting the Latent Tendencies

- Q *“Sukhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ pahātabbaṃ, dukkhāya vedanāya kiṃ pahātabbaṃ, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya kiṃ pahātabba”nti? — “Sister! Which defilements in pleasant feeling should be rejected? Which defilements in painful feeling should be rejected? Which defilements in neutral feeling should be rejected?*
- A *“Sukhāya kho, āvuso Visākha, vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo pahātabbo, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo”ti. — “Friend Visākha! The latent tendency to lust should be rejected in pleasant feeling. The latent tendency to aversion should be rejected in painful feeling. The latent tendency to ignorance should be rejected in neutral feeling.”*

If the physical and mental feelings of pleasure and happiness cannot be contemplated and known, the pleasurable attachment of the latent tendency to lust will remain, and it will have the opportunity to occur. However, if pleasant feeling is contemplated and realised as impermanent, *etc.*, lust will have no chance to occur in that feeling and will be rejected. It means that pleasant feeling should be rejected, giving no opportunity for its occurrence by contemplating to get liberated. This lust should be rejected to prevent its occurrence in the pleasurable sensations of beautiful sights and melodious sounds, which are the sensations of pleasure. The aversion that rests on painful feeling should be rejected by contemplation to deter it from occurring. Likewise, ugly sights and harsh sounds, *etc.*, that occur with a feeling of pain or displeasure, should be rejected by contemplating to prevent anger (*dosa*) from arising. The latent tendency to ignorance, misperception, and delusion (*avijjānusaya*), which rests on neutral feelings should also be rejected by contemplating to prevent it from occurring.

Ignorance and delusion can always occur in all mind and matter, which are called the aggregates of attachment (*upādānakkhandhā*). That is why all phenomena that arise from the six sense doors should

be contemplated, and the delusion in connection with these should be rejected. What has been explained in this Sutta is that the latent tendency to lust rests on pleasant feeling, whereas the latent tendency to aversion, and the latent tendency to ignorance rest on painful and neutral feelings, respectively. The explanation given simply describes how ‘resting’ is primarily rejected. Secondarily, in pleasant and painful feelings, which are rested upon by lust and aversion, ignorance is also resting, and this too should be rejected. Therefore, in the Yamaka Pāḷi text of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, which fully describes how resting occurs, it is stated that the latent tendency to ignorance is resting upon all five aggregates of attachment which is called the personality (*sakkāya*). It also explained thus in respect of wrong view and doubt.

Having heard how each of the three latent tendencies have primarily rested upon the three feelings, Visākha put another set of questions.

Q *“Sabbāya nu kho, ayye, sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo pahātabbo, sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo”ti? — “Sister! Should the latent tendency to lust be rejected in all pleasant feelings? Should the latent tendency to aversion be rejected in all painful feelings? Should the latent tendency to ignorance be rejected in all neutral feelings?*

A *“Na kho, āvuso Visākha, sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, na sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo pahātabbo, na sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo.”* — Friend Visākha! The latent tendency to lust should not be rejected in all pleasant feelings. The latent tendency to aversion should not be rejected in all painful feelings. The latent tendency to ignorance should not be rejected in all neutral feelings.”

The question would then naturally arise what are those that should not be rejected, and further explanation was given. The explanation given is not easy to be understood by those who are not knowledgeable. Therefore, it will be clarified for the sake of arousing respect.

In this Buddha’s dispensation, a bhikkhu, being free from lust and other unwholesome mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), is said to be absorbed in the first *jhāna*. The object of the first *jhāna* may be one

ten devices (*kaṣiṇa*) such as, the earth device, or may be one of the ten repulsive objects (*asubha*) such as a bloated corpse. It may be a sign (*nimitta*) of the incoming and outgoing breath, or one of the 32 parts of the human body (*koṭṭhāsa*), such as head hairs, body hairs, etc. It may also be one of the contemplations on loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), etc.

At the initial stage of meditation, it should be contemplated mentally noting continuously as “earth, earth” etc. If the meditation object is the respiration, the inhaling and exhaling breath should be incessantly contemplated and noted. If concentration is not yet strong enough, sensual thoughts and fantasies could arise. To dispel such unwholesome thoughts, contemplation must be made with attention firmly fixed on the sense-objects or feelings. When contemplation progresses and concentration gains strength, the mind absorbs into the sense-objects and remains free from hindrances. This is the stage approaching *jhāna* and is called access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). It is also known as “*upacāra jhāna*.” When this access concentration gains full strength, absorption (*jhāna*) with its five intrinsic factors — initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), bliss (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), is attained. This first absorption, being the first of four stages of absorption, is known as the first *jhāna*. The unwholesome mental hindrances, such as the sensual desire, have been removed from the moment of achieving access concentration, immediately prior to the attainment of the first *jhāna*. These unwholesome mental states are likely to be absent even after the ecstatic mind has ceased. This is why *jhāna* is extolled as “Secluded from sensual thoughts and unwholesome mental states (*vivicche kamehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*).” Moreover, as the four intrinsic factors, such as initial application are particularly involved in that *jhāna*, it has also been praised as “*Savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekaṃ pītisukhaṃ*.” Absorption, which means contemplation with penetrated concentration fixed on one single object, is a peculiar kind of concentration. A person who has attained that *jhāna* can remain constantly calm in a tranquil state on his sense-object with ecstatic mind for five minutes, ten minutes, half an hour, an hour, or more. Ecstasy, rapture, and enthusiasm occur. Extreme joy and happiness also prevail. Because of this ecstatic mind, the whole body becomes

poised and as light as a feather, and one feels very comfortable. For this reason, pleasurable attachment to that *jhāna* usually occurs. Nevertheless, the bhikkhu referred to in this explanation, reaches the Path and Fruition of Arahantship after contemplating this *jhāna* at the time when the ecstatic mind has ceased to occur.

In the Commentary it is stated that he only reaches the Path of Once-returning, and at this stage, only lust can be rejected. desire for existence in the realms of form (*rūpabhava*) and formless realms (*arūpabhava*) cannot be rejected yet. Therefore, it would seem necessary to consider whether the passionate desire (*rāga*) is absent or not in *jhāna*. Of course, if the path of Arahantship is attained, there is no need for any such consideration. Since he is also free from desire for existence (*bhavarāga*), it is clear that passionate desire cannot possibly occur. If the fruition of Arahantship is reached, both sensual desire and desire for existence are eradicated. After absorption there is no chance for occurrence of attachment to *jhāna*. The total escape from passionate desire by the power of Arahantship is the result of the attainment of the path, which is acquired by depending upon that fundamental *jhāna*. It, therefore, amounts to dispelling passionate desire by virtue of *jhāna* serving as a basis for Arahantship. Such being the case, since passionate desire will have no opportunity to occur in *jhāna*, the latent tendency to passionate desire in the pleasant feeling that is involved in that *jhāna*, need not be rejected by insight. This is why it was said that the latent tendency to passionate desire in the pleasant feeling of *jhāna* ought not to be rejected. This is the explanation according to its original intention. The essence of this meaning is that passionate desire is rejected by the basic *jhāna* with a view to achieving Arahantship, and that latent tendency to passionate desire does not rest on the first *jhāna*. As it is not so rested, there is no need for rejection.

This is a very difficult answer to be understood. However, as Visākha was a Non-returner, he seems to have grasped the meaning with satisfaction. This is the explanation given as to why the latent tendency to passionate desire should not be rejected.

Further explanation was given why the latent tendency to aversion should also not be rejected:

In this Buddha's dispensation, a bhikkhu reflects and yearns: "At the present time, Noble Ones are seeking refuge in the noble Dhamma.

When will I be able to fully acquire this noble Dhamma?" A person who is longing for the noblest Dhamma or Arahantship for final liberation is said to be feeling sorry and dejected because of his longing for a desired thing. If a meditator expects to achieve the noble path of Arahantship within a month — or at least within two or three months — fails to achieve his objective as expected, he or she would probably reflect: "Others have attained the path, whereas I have not had a glimpse of that noble Dhamma though I have been striving hard." As doubt arises, he or she may soliloquise: "Is there any possibility for me to attain the path?" Under such circumstances, dejection and sorrow might arise. Such a feeling of dejection (*domanassa*) is painful feeling rested upon by the latent tendency to aversion. However, such feelings are not that kind of dhamma that should be rejected because it has arisen dependant on the expectation to achieve the noble Dhamma. On the contrary, it is a dhamma that should be relied upon, and this kind of dhamma on which reliance should be made is stated in the [Sakkapañha Sutta](#). Depending upon this dejection if, by making relentless effort, the path and fruition of Non-returning is attained, the latent tendency to aversion concerning the aforesaid dejection will be rejected automatically. "That is why the latent tendency to aversion does not rest upon the painful feeling of dejection. As it is not so resting, the latent tendency to aversion in this kind of painful feeling need not be rejected. The matter is further clarified as follows: dejection that has arisen due to being unable to achieve the Noble Path, rejects the latent tendency to aversion. Of course, the latent tendency to aversion does not rest on dejection. This statement is made in accord with the intention. Dejection cannot dispel unwholesome states. However, the path and fruition of Non-returning, *etc.*, are achieved by contemplating assiduously depending upon the dejection that occurs in relation to the achievement of the noble Dhamma. Aversion is rejected by the faculty of the path of Non-returning thereby attained. Since rejection of aversion is done by the path achieved with the support of dejection, it is stated that rejection is made by dejection. The achievement of this noble and special dhamma is illustrated in the Commentary with the story of [Mahāphussadeva Thera](#) of the Alindaka monastery. It runs as follows:—

This Venerable elder, failing to achieve Arahantship was said to be afflicted with sorrow and dejection to the extent of shedding

tears every time the annual invitation ceremony (*pavāraṇā*) was held at the end of the Rainy Season (*vassa*). It is stated that he had to suffer mental pain for nineteen successive years. Only on the twentieth year did he attain Arahantship. The meditation exercises practised by Venerable Mahāphussadeva Thera are described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Commentary.<sup>1</sup> He fulfilled the duty while going and coming for alms (*gatapaccāgatikavattaṃ*) throughout a long period of nineteen years. This duty for bhikkhus means to contemplate with continuous mindfulness, without a break, when walking to and from the village to collect almsfood. As the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta says: “When going, he knows ‘I am going,’ when standing, he knows, ‘I am standing,’ etc.” It is similar to the way of contemplating and noting practised by our meditators every time they lift the foot, take a step, or put down the foot as: “lifting,” “stepping,” and “putting,” or, “up,” “forward,” and “down.” The mode of contemplation adopted by this elder, was to note every step from beginning to end in the act of walking so as to maintain constant awareness. If he failed to note any step at all, he returned to where his mind had first wandered, and resumed noting each step that had escaped his attention. It is stated that those who had seen this elder retracing his steps so often, had a different impression and gossiped about it: “What could be the reason for his doing this?” They thought, “He might have lost his way or left something behind due to lapse of memory!”

Paying no heed to such gossip, he continued to practise meditation with attentiveness without a break with all his might. After twenty years he attained Arahantship. This story is also cited in Dīghanikāya Commentary.<sup>2</sup> A similar story is described in the prelude to the Commentary on the Sakkapaṇha Sutta. The story relates to a monk named Mahāsīva Thera.<sup>3</sup> He became an Arahant on the Invitation Ceremony day only after thirty years of relentless effort hindered throughout his meditation practice by dejection. This story can be found in [A Discourse on the Sakkapaṇha Sutta](#).<sup>4</sup>

Continuing further with the answer, Dhammadinnā gave her clarification relating to why the latent tendency to ignorance in neutral feelings should not be rejected.

<sup>1</sup> MA.i.524. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

<sup>2</sup> DA.i.170. Mahāsatiipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

<sup>3</sup> DA.iii.727, Mahāsivattheravattu.

<sup>4</sup> The Questions of Sakka, page 21.

A *“Idhāvuso Visākha, bhikkhu sukhasa ca pahānā, dukkhasa ca pahānā, pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā, adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsati pārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Avijjaṃ tena pajahati, na tattha avijjānusayo anuseti”*ti. — “Friend Visākha! Here, a bhikkhu, having rejected pleasure and pain, and unaffected by the former feelings of happiness and sorrow, he enters into the fourth *jhāna*, where only neutral feelings are present. The latent tendency to ignorance does not rest on the neutral feeling in the fourth *jhāna* so need not be rejected.”

In this regard, the expression “enters into” means remaining in a state of absorption in the fourth *jhāna*, the highest of all *jhānas*. In this *jhāna*, there is no pleasure or pain, no sorrow or dejection, which means a total absence of all four of these feelings. Only neutral feelings are present. A further explanation was made how the latent tendency to ignorance becomes absent without resting on neutral feelings, as is usually the case.

This fourth *jhāna*, which is fundamental in achieving Arahantship, rejects ignorance. The latent tendency to ignorance does not rest on neutral feelings found in the fourth *jhāna*. Since there is no chance for its occurrence, ignorance need not be rejected. This is the teaching based on Dhammadinnā’s intention. Ordinarily, of course, the latent tendency to ignorance always rests on every neutral feeling. In accordance with Abhidhamma teachings, it may, however, be noted that the latent tendency to ignorance should be rejected by insight knowledge and path knowledge. In the case of recluses who were living outside the domain of the Buddha’s dispensation, the latent tendency to lust and the latent tendency to ignorance rested on the *jhānas* that they had attained. Inside the realm of Buddha’s dispensation too, the latent tendency to lust, *etc.*, always remain in the case of persons who have not yet reached the Noble Path.

Individuals like Devadatta and Sunakkhatta attained not only *jhāna* but also some supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). However, in regard to *jhānas* attained by such people, as they were uttering with antagonism in contradiction to what the Buddha has taught, it is quite clear that various kinds of latent tendencies would rest upon the *jhānas* achieved by them. When it is said that Non-returners reached the celestial abode of the Brahmās, it is obvious that the *jhāna* that elevated them to the Brahmāloka is not free from latent tendencies. Therefore,

ordinarily in neutral feelings that are present in the fourth *jhāna*, the latent tendency to ignorance is still an impediment and not absent. Hence, undoubtedly this latent tendency should be rejected.

On the other hand, according to Dhammadinnā, as the fourth *jhāna* neutral feeling is free from the latent tendency to ignorance, it need not be rejected. The intention being that an extraordinary individual will strive to reach the stage of Arahantship and will immerse himself or herself in the fourth *jhāna*, using it as a vehicle for insight. After exiting from that absorption, by using insight contemplation, he or she reaches Arahantship. Since the latent tendency to ignorance has no opportunity to occur in fourth *jhāna* neutral feelings, it will not be necessary to reject the latent tendency to ignorance. In fact, it is the path of Arahantship that rejects the latent tendency to ignorance. However, as it is not independent of the support of basic fourth *jhāna*, it may be stated that, according to the intention, it is the fourth *jhāna* neutral feeling that has rejected the latent tendency to ignorance. For example, when the branch of a tree is cut off by a machete, it is not the handle that severs the branch, but the edge of the blade. As the branch of a tree is cut off with the support of the handle, it can be said, according to the intention, that the branch is severed with the handle of the machete. It may be understood in the same way.

The qualities of the fourth *jhāna* have been extolled in the foregoing. It may now be recounted that among the meditators here who are practising insight meditation, some have discovered what the nature of *jhāna* is. Such persons can easily understand the subject of *jhāna* which will now be described. Those who have had no experience in the practical knowledge of *jhāna* meditation may find it difficult to grasp. The subject is subtle. Painful and pleasant feelings have already been rejected prior to the attainment of the fourth *jhāna*. Happiness and dejection have also ceased and are absent. This shows that these four feelings are absent in the fourth *jhāna*. It means that in the fourth *jhāna* there is no pain, pleasure, sorrow, or happy and joyous feelings. Regarding when they were rejected, it may be stated that since the first occurrence of access concentration before reaching the first *jhāna*, painful physical feelings such as stiffness, hotness, aching, itching, *etc.*, have been rejected. There is no mental feeling of sorrow when access concentra-



tion is occurring. However, as concentration is not yet very strong, when something that can cause unhappiness occurs, sorrow can arise. It is entirely absent only on the occurrence of access concentration when approaching the second *jhāna*. Thenceforth, the miserable mental feelings of sorrow have been rejected. Physical pleasurable feelings have been rejected from the arising of access concentration on the threshold of attaining the third *jhāna*. Before the achievement of this access concentration, rapture (*pīti*) is not yet absent. Therefore, the rapture that has occurred depending on the material form cause by mental consciousness, having encountered pleasant sensations, extremely good physical pleasure continues to abide. While persevering to attain the third *jhāna*, which is devoid of rapture, access concentration will occur. With the occurrence of this powerfully concentration, rapture will disappear, which puts an end to the occurrence of physical pleasure. However, pleasurable and joyous feelings of happiness (*somanassa*) become absent at the moment of the occurrence of access concentration immediately prior to attaining the fourth *jhāna*. This fourth *jhāna* is not accompanied by bliss (*sukha*), but with the neutral feeling of equanimity (*upekkhā*). Hence, from the time of gaining access concentration, the fourth *jhāna* appears in conjunction with neutral feeling, free of bliss. Therefore, it has been shown that both pleasure and pain have already been rejected. Happiness and sorrow have also ceased and have been rejected. What actually happens in sequence is that it begins with the expulsion of physical suffering. When approaching the second *jhāna*, sorrow is absent. Since the time of approaching the third *jhāna*, physical pleasure has ceased to occur. On approaching the fourth *jhāna*, mental happiness arising from pleasurable sensation becomes absent. Therefore, there is no physical or mental suffering during the occurrence of the fourth *jhāna*. There remains only neutral feelings with neither pleasure nor pain.

Of the four kinds of *jhāna* stated above, in the first *jhāna*, initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*) are included. Moreover, rapture (*pīti*), and bliss (*sukha*), are also included therein. One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), unification of mind with deep concentration on the meditation object, is also included.

The five qualities of that *jhāna* can be clearly found in the course of insight meditation when contemplation becomes progressively

strengthened up to the stage of [Knowledge by Comprehension](#) (*sammāsana-ñāṇa*), which verifies and reflects the true nature of mind and matter as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. Initial application, sustained application, rapture, bliss, and deep concentration with one-pointedness on the meditation object are all obviously taking place in relation to the respective sensation that occurs. In the Second *jhāna* called *samatha-jhāna*, initial application and sustained application are no longer included. Only rapture, bliss, and one-pointedness are present. At this stage, extreme joy or ecstasy is vivid. Bliss also becomes more obvious than before. At the immature stage of the [Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away](#) (*udayabhaya-ñāṇa*), rapture and bliss are particularly distinct. Rapture pervades the whole body, which becomes extremely light and comfortable as if it were floating in the air. Rapturous feelings spread all over, and an unusual sensation of extreme happiness, full of joy and enthusiasm, pervade the entire nervous system of the body. In the third *jhāna*, rapture is left behind, but extreme delight overwhelms. Concentration becomes further strengthened. The two factors of bliss and one-pointedness are called the third *jhāna*.

In insight meditation, this bliss is more convincing at the mature stage of the knowledge of arising and passing away. Every time contemplation is made, there is tranquility of mind with peace and happiness without any rapturous feeling and enthusiasm. As regards the fourth *samatha jhāna*, as stated earlier, physical and mental pleasure have faded away and only the neutral feeling of equanimity (*upekkhā*) remains. This equanimity and one-pointedness are the factors of the fourth *jhāna*.

In the case of insight meditation, equanimity and one-pointedness become conspicuous beginning from [Knowledge of Dissolution](#) (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). They become particularly clear at the stage of [Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations](#) (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). On attaining this stage, miserable feelings in the body are entirely absent — they do not arise at all. Even if there has been any ailment, such as cough, *etc.*, it will fail to manifest and will be cured. There are a number of instances where diseases that failed to respond to medical treatment have been completely cured and where the sick have been restored to normal health. Sorrow is absent at the stage of insight knowledge. Miserable feelings totally disappear the moment that

contemplation with mindfulness is applied. Though one may feel nice and comfortable, physical pleasurable condition will probably be vague at this stage. Happiness and joy is likely to be absent, replaced by tranquillity. Only the neutral feeling of equanimity are conspicuous. Therefore, those who have completely achieved the knowledge of equanimity about formations can very well understand by comparison through personal experience that all the four feelings are absent and that only the neutral feelings occurs in the fourth *jhāna*. At the moment of absorption in the fourth *jhāna*, the breathing stops.

In the preceding statement wherein it has been mentioned that just before attaining *nirodhasamāpatti*, the bodily formations cease first. This means that because of the faculty of this fourth *jhāna*, the breathing ceases and disappears. Some meditators who are practising insight meditation will find that the breathing disappears. Even bystanders who are watching them will clearly witness the absence of breathing. It has been mentioned that one praiseworthy feature of the fourth *jhāna* is the exalted state of mental purity brought about by equanimity. This is not neutral feeling. It is the mental state (*cetasikā*) of equipoise (*tatramajjhata*) that balances the faculties accompanying the fourth *jhāna*. It balances confidence (*saddhā*) with wisdom (*paññā*). This balancing is done because, if confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha goes to the extreme, there can be deficiency on the part of wisdom (*paññā*). If the discriminating mind goes to the extreme, what is believable may be regarded as unbelievable. Depending upon experience, if the reflective knowledge becomes exuberant, the right method of meditation may not be accepted as believable. There are instances where meditation is neglected because of lack of faith. If insight meditation is practised without diligence and sincere faith, and without controlling the wandering mind, concentration may not be gained. If concentration is not developed, genuine insight knowledge will not be achieved. There are people who have not gained concentration and have wasted their time because of lack of faith when they first practised. They only realise their mistake at a later stage when they gained concentration and insight after diligent and serious contemplation. It is essential to maintain confidence and wisdom in balance. If one sincerely and respectfully practices insight meditation in accordance with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as taught by the Buddha, equanim-

ity will be strengthened and that will keep confidence and wisdom in balance avoiding the extremes. When they are kept in equilibrium, special knowledge will definitely arise.

Next, if exertion is excessive, tranquillity will be disturbed. If a novice meditator contemplates various sense-objects such as sights and sounds, restlessness may become excessive. If so, the mind may not be able to remain fixed on any object. While contemplating one object, he or she may be eager to contemplate another, and the mind may skip on to a different object. Concentration will be deprived of the strength it needs to fix firmly on the object that is being contemplated, so the mind may wander or vacillate. If the mind is unstable like this, concentration is weak. If concentration has no strength, insight cannot occur. If contemplation is made on only one object with fixed concentration, exertion may lose vigour as there will be restlessness and agitation. If exertion and earnestness diminish, concentration will be in excess which will give a chance for sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*) to creep in. If this happens, as no proper concentration will occur, and insight knowledge will not arise.

For the above reasons, it is necessary to keep exertion and concentration in balance. To maintain this balance, it is essential to contemplate at least two objects at the initial stage, and not only one, but neither should one contemplate on many. Therefore, instructions are given to contemplate on two objects, such as, “sitting” and “touching,” or the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. By contemplating like this, equanimity is restored and becomes firm, then mindfulness gains momentum on its own accord without having to worry much, but not entirely without earnestness. By so doing, awareness becomes keen without getting tired in contemplation. On reaching the knowledge of arising and passing away, without making excessive anxious effort, mindfulness becomes obvious. This clearly indicates the manifestation of equipoise. Whether at the time of offering alms, observing morality, paying homage, or listening to a discourse, *i.e.*, every time meritorious deeds are performed, equipoise (*tatramajjhata*), is involved. However, when such ordinary wholesome thoughts are occurring, equipoise is indistinct. Even learned people do not clearly perceive it. These educated people generally teach only after memorising the Dhamma. However, according to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, to a meditator who is contemplat-

ing mind and matter at the moment of their arising — though he may be uneducated — if he has reached the stage of knowledge of arising and passing away, equanimity becomes distinct.

### The Three Characteristics of Equanimity

The evenly balanced qualities are more convincing at the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations. A meditator who has reached this stage need only contemplate and note four, five, or ten times in earnest whether starting from the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, or from any other conspicuous sensation. From then onwards, without special endeavour or much concern, mindfulness automatically becomes strengthened by its own impetus. This is one of the three balancing qualities of the knowledge of equanimity about formations. An aphorism has been composed as: “Free from the conditions of fear and delight,” in accordance with what is stated in the Visuddhimagga: “*Bhayañca nandiñca vipphāya sañkhāresu udāsīno.*” When [Awareness of Fearfulness](#) (*bhaya-ñāṇa*), [Knowledge of Misery](#) (*adīnavā-ñāṇa*), etc., was achieved, fearfulness was distinct. The faults of existence were perceived, so there was weariness and a desire to abandon it. A special effort was made to abandon it. All these are eliminated on the attainment of the knowledge of equanimity about formations. When the knowledge of arising and passing away was achieved, the meditator delighted in the extraordinary awareness, etc., but with the attainment of equanimity, this extreme attachment was dispelled. Referring to this, it has been mentioned that fearfulness as well as perception of the faults of fearfulness, misery, etc., and also delight, are abandoned. After dispelling (*vipphaya*) them in respect of all formations (*sañkhāresu*) that have arisen, such as sights and sounds, etc., evenly balanced contemplation is carried on with neither affection nor hatred, i.e. with indifference (*udasīno*).

This teaching on balanced contemplation may be recited in the form of a motto: “Happiness and suffering should be contemplated just the same.” Pleasant and unpleasant sensations are regarded as the same. When the knowledge of equanimity about formations is occurring, irrespective of whether there is happiness or suffering, or pleasant or unpleasant sensations, it is found that even contemplation is made with bare awareness. It has, therefore, been taught in the Book of Tens:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.v.29. Duttiya Ariyāvāsa Suttaṃ.

*“Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā neva sumano hoti na dummano, upekkhako viharati sato sampajāno. Monks! In this teaching, a monk, after having seen a sight, is neither delighted nor dejected, but abides with equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.”*

In other words, though he has seen a visual object, no matter how pleasant it is, he entertains neither happiness nor joy. Of course, it does not mean that he is unhappy and miserable. He is not unhappy no matter how ugly the sights may be. Then, the question arises as to what happens. It may be stated he is contemplating with bare awareness, remaining indifferent with an evenly balanced state of mind. Why is this? It is because he realises the truth. The moment he has seen the object, he contemplates and notes its arising and dissolution with mindfulness. Hence, the realisation occurs that all these occurrences are merely impermanent, *etc.* The ability to contemplate like this with indifference is the inherent quality of an Arahant. However, it is stated that in the case of a meditator who is contemplating continuously every time he or she sees while reaching the knowledge of equanimity about formations, is regarded as being fully accomplished. Similarly, the way of contemplation with indifference has been taught as: “On hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking with the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and realising the nature of the sensations with awareness ...”

This statement conveys exactly the same sense as: “Happiness and suffering should be contemplated just the same,” which is the motto relating to the quality of evenly balanced contemplation. Let us recite the following motto::

“May I rightly know the sound that is heard by contemplating and noting. May I rightly know the odour that is smelt by contemplating and noting. May I rightly know the flavour that is tasted by contemplating and noting. May I rightly know the touch that is felt by contemplating and noting. May I rightly know the ideas that are thought by contemplating and noting. May I remain indifferent, without disappointment or delight by contemplating and noting. O, meditator! It is possible to know objects rightly if one contemplates like an Arahant.”

The third quality is equanimity, which means contemplating with indifference (*upekkhā*), without extraordinary effort or concern to bring about contemplative awareness in accordance with the Visuddhi-magga, wherein it says that in ascertaining and scrutinizing the mental and physical formations, one assumes the neutral attitude with bare awareness of the occurrence as impermanent, *etc.* It is also in line with what has been described in Mahātika as “being contemplated with indifference on insight in the same way as contemplating with indifference on the mental and physical formations.” In this connection, let us recite the following pair of stanzas:

“Free from attachment and aversion, equal contemplation of the happiness and suffering should be made. Do not be too concerned for the purpose of easier contemplation. Making a total of three qualities of the knowledge of equanimity.”

What has been stated indicates how the indifference called equipoise (*tatramajjhata*) brings the accompanying states to a state of perfect balance. Due to this indifference, mindful awareness is said to be wholly purified.

Now this seems adequate to be comprehend how *samatha-jhāna* occurs in conjunction with insight knowledge. The salient point in Dhammadinnā’s answer is to show that the latent tendency to ignorance in equanimity does not need to be rejected if the fourth *jhāna* as the foundation of insight has been gained by contemplation. Proceeding further continuously, if Arahantship is attained, since the latent tendency to ignorance has no chance to occur in the equanimity of the fourth *jhāna*, it need not be rejected. Having heard the above answers, Visākha put the following question:—

### Question and Answers on Counterparts

Q “*Sukhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ paṭibhāgo*”ti? — Sister! What is counterpart of pleasant feeling?”

A “*Sukhāya kho, āvuso Visākha, vedanāya dukkhā vedanā paṭibhāgo*”ti. — “Friend Visākha! Unpleasant feeling is the counterpart of pleasant feeling.”

The answer does not convey the sense that they are equivalent, but indicates some kind of similarity. It may be interpreted as an

analogy to make the underlying sense in the expression “counterpart (*paṭibhāga*)” more obvious. Just as pleasant feeling is pleasing, painful feeling is displeasing, so a comparison can be made between them. An analogy may be drawn between a mountain — which soars to a great height — and a ravine, which descends to a great depth. In much the same way, there is some sort of similarity between pleasant and painful feelings. Then Visākha asked what is the counterpart of painful feeling.

Q “*Dukkhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ paṭibhāgo*”ti? — Sister! What is the counterpart of painful feeling?”

A “*Dukkhāya kho, āvuso Visākha, vedanāya sukhā vedanā paṭibhāgo*”ti. — Friend Visākha! Pleasant feeling is the counterpart of painful feeling.”

Then Visākha asked:

Q “*Adukkhamasukhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ paṭibhāgo*”ti? — Sister! What is the counterpart of indifferent feeling?”

A “*Adukkhamasukhāya kho, āvuso Visākha, avijjā paṭibhāgo*”ti. — Friend Visākha! Ignorance is the counterpart of indifferent feeling.”

Q “*Avijjāya panāyye, kiṃ paṭibhāgo*”ti? — Sister! What is the counterpart of ignorance?”

A “*Avijjāya kho, āvuso Visākha, vijjā paṭibhāgo*”ti. — Friend Visākha! Knowledge is the counterpart of ignorance.”

Pleasant and painful feelings are obvious and clearly understandable. On the other hand indifferent feeling is not easily perceptible and is difficult to understand. In the same way, greed and anger are conspicuous and clear. Ignorance or delusion is obscure and is hard to know. Greed and anger, such as feelings of desire and attachment, can be clearly known. Observers will know when a person smiles giving a free rein to greed. If anger arises, it is all the more clearly visible and known. By looking at the personal behaviour and finding one making grimaces, or hearing harsh utterances, it can be known that there is anger or hatred present. How delusion (*moha*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) occur is difficult to know.

Ignorance means misunderstanding the nature of mind and matter, which are in reality impermanent, unsatisfactory, and



not-self, but are erroneously perceived as permanent, pleasurable, and self. This is what may be called ignorance. It means misperception. Those who do not care to contemplate every time that they see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or imagine, wrongly conceive these physical and mental activities as being permanent, *etc.* The arising of these sensations is really difficult to be realised as mere ignorance or delusion. At every moment when desirable attachment occurs, ignorance and delusion are involved. Nevertheless, the feeling of desirable attachment is quite evident, whereas ignorance or unknowingness is not. When one gets angry, it also involves ignorance and delusion, but though anger is clearly perceived ignorance is not. That is why Dhammadinnā replied that indifferent feeling, which is indistinct and difficult to know clearly, is the counterpart of ignorance, which is also not obvious and difficult to know.

Again, in reply to a further query:

Q “*Vijjāya panāyye, kiṃ paṭibhāgo*”*ti?* — Sister! What is the counterpart of knowledge?”

A “*Vijjāya kho, āvuso Visākha, vimutti paṭibhāgo*”*ti.* — Friend Visākha! Liberation is the counterpart of knowledge.”

The counterpart of ignorance is knowledge. Whenever a wrong conception of phenomena arises at the time of seeing, hearing, touching, knowing, *etc.*, it is ignorance. The two may be likened to the opposites of darkness and light. Just as ordinary people cannot contemplate every time seeing, hearing, *etc.*, occur — thus wrongly perceiving them as permanent, pleasurable, and self — meditators who continually contemplate phenomena will notice the incessant arising and dissolution phenomena when concentration becomes strong. They realise the truth that such phenomena are not-self in the sense of being ungovernable, and are unsatisfactory. This insight is knowledge (*vijjā*). All of the meditators in this centre are continuously striving to gain such knowledge. At every moment of realising the truth with this knowledge, ignorance is being dispelled. This is similar to the vanishing of darkness when light arises. This is how the latent tendency to ignorance is dispelled by insight knowledge.

When this insight knowledge is fully matured, the knowledge of the Noble Path occurs. With the faculty of this Path knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*), nibbāna is realised. The realisation of nibbāna will

eradicate ignorance. Hence, every effort is being made to achieve this Path knowledge.

Dhammadinnā's answer indicated that knowledge runs counter to ignorance, resembling a rival in a competition. Thereafter, Visākha proceeded with another question.

Q *"Vimuttiyā panāyye, kiṃ paṭibhāgo"ti?* — Sister! What is the counterpart of liberation?"

A *"Vimuttiyā kho, āvuso Visākha, nibbānaṃ paṭibhāgo"ti.* — Friend Visākha! Nibbāna is the counterpart of liberation."

The liberation gained from achieving the Noble Path is a condition of emancipation from defilements. It is the counterpart of knowledge. Liberation (*vimutti*) is the beneficial result of the Noble Path, which is called the Fruition of the Noble Path (*ariyaphala*). The Path and its Fruition are similar in nature. Then Visākha asked:

Q *"Nibbānassa panāyye, kiṃ paṭibhāgo"ti?* — Sister! What is the counterpart of nibbāna?"

A *"Accayāsi, āvuso Visākha, pañhaṃ, nāsakkhi pañhānaṃ pariyantaṃ gahetuṃ. Nibbānogadhañhi, āvuso Visākha, brahmacariyaṃ, nibbānaparāyanaṃ nibbānapariyosānaṃ. ākaṅkhamāno ca tvaṃ, āvuso Visākha, Bhagavantaṃ upasaṅkamitvā etamatthaṃ puccheyyāsi, yathā ca te Bhagavā byākaroti tathā naṃ dhāreyyāsi"ti.* — Friend Visākha! This question goes too far, and it is impossible to grasp the end of this line of questioning. The holy life is grounded in nibbāna, culminates in nibbāna, and has nibbāna as its goal. Friend Visākha! If you wish, go to the Blessed One and question him about the meaning of this. As he explains it, so should you remember it."

Nibbāna is similar to the Fruition of the Noble Path as both have the same noble attributes. The similarity between these two is that both are entirely emancipated from the bondage of the defilements. Defilements cannot dwell on the Noble Path. Nor will they be able to contemplate nibbāna. Putting it in another way, an Arahant has rooted out all defilements, and is fully emancipated from them. Nibbāna is the state in which all defilements cease to exist. Being free from corruptions (*āsava*), which are synonymous with defilements (*kilesa*), liberation and nibbāna are similar in nature. The

Noble Path, which has passed beyond the mundane (*lokiya*) is supramundane (*lokuttara*), and nibbāna is also supramundane, so is similar in nature. The Noble Path is also indeterminate (*abyākata*), which is neither wholesome (*kusala*) nor unwholesome (*akusala*). Nibbāna is also indeterminate. They are, therefore, of the same nature. This is as described in the Commentary. However, the statement that there is similarity in what is indeterminate is not highly regarded.

If viewed from a different point of view, there are some points that are not in agreement. Fruition of the Noble Path is a conditioned state that can be altered or measured. Nibbāna, on the other hand, is the unconditioned, the uncreated, the immaterial, the uncaused, the unchangeable state of perfection. Fruition is something that brings realisation of nibbāna and which discerns the truth. Nibbāna is a mental object (*ārammaṇa*) that is incapable of producing consciousness. Again, Fruition is an impermanent state that is subject to transience like everything in nature, forming and dissolving, whereas nibbāna is immutable. Next, Fruition means the four mental aggregates (*khandhā*). Nibbāna is free from every conceivable attribute of a being or aggregate. Moreover, Fruition is the personal (*ajjhatta*) realisation of nibbāna that occurs in the personality of a Noble One, whereas nibbāna is outside (*bahiddhā*) the personality of an individual. If analysed in this way the Fruition of the Noble Path and nibbāna are different in nature. However, since they are both supramundane phenomena that have reached the goal, and which bring emancipation from the miseries of the cycle of existence, it may be stated that liberation and nibbāna have the same nature.

Having listened in earnest to the answers given by Dhammadinnā, Visākha's final question, "What is the counterpart of nibbāna?" was rejected by Dhammadinnā on the grounds of impropriety. She further remarked "Friend Visākha! You have exceeded the bounds of propriety in raising a question that ought to be avoided. There will be no end if you continue any further. You should have asked only what is appropriate. Now you have gone too far."

This question is inappropriate because the Buddhadhamma is the Noble Eightfold Path, which leads to nibbāna. It is conducive to nibbāna. The Noble Eightfold Path is a way to realise the truth, and nibbāna is the ultimate goal. Since it is the ultimate goal, no question should arise about the counterpart of nibbāna. The

Buddha's teaching on morality, concentration, and wisdom, which is the Noble Eightfold Path, ends with nibbāna. That is the perfect sanctity, and there is nothing beyond that. It is the noblest goal. Hence, there is no other dhamma that is the counterpart or equal of nibbāna. It follows that it is improper to raise that question.

Dhammadinnā summed up with the following statement: "Friend Visākha! If at all the answers given by me do not meet with your entire satisfaction, you may respectfully approach the Blessed One, and further put questions recounting all that I have said. If you seek the advice of the Blessed One, please accept and remember all that the Buddha teaches you in response to your queries.

### **Explanation of the Dialogue in This Sutta**

Being fully satisfied with the explanation given to his questions relating to personality (*sakkāya*), Visākha raised a series of questions that ought to be asked, up to the question on what kind of dhamma is the counterpart of liberation (*vimutti*). The sequence of answers explained one after another is called a dialectic (*vedalla*).

The discourse containing questions put by Venerable Koṭṭhika Thera and answers given by Venerable Sāriputta Thera is named the Mahāvedalla Sutta. It is called the "Greater Series of Questions and Answers" because of its greater scope, whereas the present Sutta, being smaller, is given the name "Lesser Series of Questions and Answers," the Cūḷavedalla Sutta. It is so called because of the elated satisfaction of the knowledge on which reliance was made in replying to the questions. It may be said to be a shorter discourse.

### **Visākha Sought Instructions from the Blessed One**

The final question of Visākha, which met with a critical remark by Dhammadinnā for having exceeded the limits of propriety, may be considered as a test to know the depth of knowledge attained by Dhammadinnā. Visākha was a Non-returner, so would probably be well aware of nibbāna as the noblest dhamma and the ultimate goal. He accepted the criticism well. Later he made his way to the Blessed One as advised and respectfully recounted the discussion they had had. This was mentioned at the Great Buddhist Council and placed on record. The conversation between Visākha and Dhammadinnā came to a close followed by the expression of delight

(*abhinanditvā*) and approval (*anumoditvā*) from Visākha. Thereafter, Visākha got up from his seat (*uṭṭhāyāsana*) paid homage (*abhivādetvā*) to Dhammadinnā and departed, respectfully keeping his right side towards her (*padakkhiṇaṃ katvā*), then going to where the Buddha was residing. On arrival there, he paid homage to the Buddha with great reverence and took his seat at a suitable place neither too far away nor too close to the Buddha. Then, with due permission, he recounted the whole discussion that had taken place between him and Dhammadinnā. When he had finished his account, the Blessed One gave a reply which may be briefly described as follows-

### The Buddha's Praise of Dhammadinnā

"Friend Visākha! Dhammadinnā is wise (*pañḍita*). She is fully endowed with rare ability, great wisdom and knowledge. If you had asked me the same series of questions I would have replied in exactly the same way as Dhammadinnā." This reply confirms all that had been answered by Dhammadinnā, as is mentioned in the Commentary. Therefore, all the answers in this Sutta shall be regarded as the actual teachings of the Buddha. This is evidently quoted by the authors of the Commentary to confirm the teaching embodied in this Sutta. The Buddha pointed out that the answers rendered by Dhammadinnā were the correct explanation of all the problematic questions presented by Visākha for clarification.

Sometime later, in the presence of the fourfold assembly (monks, nuns, male and female lay disciples), the Blessed One declared Dhammadinnā the foremost among his female disciples who are able to expound the dhamma, conferring on her the title of pre-eminent speaker on the Dhamma (*Dhammakathika*) among the nuns. In other words, the foremost rank (*etadagga*) was bestowed upon Dhammadinnā as one who had the gift of teaching.

She received this honour because during the lifetime of the Buddha Padumuttara, who appeared over a hundred thousand aeons ago, she was an ordinary maid-servant. She cut off her hair and with the proceeds of its sale she gave alms using all of the money to a chief disciple (*aggasāvaka*) of the Buddha by the name of Sujāta Thera. She then prayed for the future attainment of the title of pre-eminent among speakers on the Dhamma. After her demise, she became a *deva* in one of the celestial abodes. For a

hundred thousand aeons, she wandered in the cycle of existences in the celestial and human realms. More than ninety-two aeons ago during the time of the Buddha Phussa, she became the wife of a Finance Minister who was given the responsibility by the three elderly princes to supervise and manage the affairs in offering meals to the Buddha and his disciples. So great was her generosity that she donated double the amount usually intended for the purpose with exuberant faith. From then onwards, throughout ninety-two aeons (*kappa*), she wandered through existences successively in the celestial and human realms. During the present aeon, at the time of the Buddha Kassapa (the last before the Buddha Gotama), she became the sixth of the seven daughters of King Kiki, then the ruling monarch in the kingdom of Kāsi (Benares). She then bore the name of Sudhammā.

All these seven princesses, having strong faith in and devotion to the Buddha's teaching, sought permission from their father, to let them join the Bhikkhuṇī Order. Their father rejected their request, so they all had to content themselves with the practice of the Dhamma as lay disciples. During the entire life-term of twenty-thousand years, they remained unmarried and led the life of chastity (*brahmacariya*), observing the eight precepts in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. The first daughter, "Princess Samaṇī," later became one of the Chief female disciples of Gotama Buddha by the name of Khemā Therī. The second daughter, "Princess Samaṇaguttā," became Uppalavaṇṇā Therī, the second chief female disciple during the time of our Buddha. The third daughter, "Princess Bhikkhuṇī," become the well-known Paṭācārā Therī during the lifetime of our Buddha, and received the pre-eminent title for her outstanding ability in the knowledge of the monastic discipline. The fourth daughter, "Princess Bhikkhudāyikā," became a Therī by the name of Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā, on whom was conferred the title of pre-eminent among those who quickly attain higher knowledge (*khippābhiññā*) during the time of our Buddha. "Princess Dhammā," the fifth daughter, became the emaciated Kisāgotami Therī (whose story of "the parable of the mustard seed" is well known) and received the title of pre-eminent among wearers of coarse robes (*lūkhacīvaradharānaṃ*). The seventh daughter "Princess Saṅghadāyikā," became Visākhā, the famous donor and benefactor

of Pubbārāma monastery during our Buddha's lifetime. The sixth daughter, "Princess Sudhammā," after observing chastity for twenty-thousand years, and whirling around the cycle of existences in the celestial and human realms, became a daughter of a millionaire at Rājagaha before our Buddha gained Enlightenment. On reaching the age of maturity, she was married to Visākha, the son of another millionaire. While thus leading the household life as the wife of a very wealthy man as stated earlier in my discourse, at an early age of about thirty, she was ordained as a nun and soon after attained Arahantship. It was the fulfilment of her wish that she prayed for to become the pre-eminent speaker on the Dhamma.<sup>1</sup>

The *Āṅguttaranikāya* Commentary mentions that the Buddha extolled her noble qualities. After listening to Visākha, the Blessed One praised her: "My daughter Dhammadinnā has eliminated all craving for past, future, and present aggregates and is a Noble One who has discarded all evils. Therefore, relying on the statements of the precise answers given by Dhammadinnā in accordance with the noble wishes of the Blessed One, we shall make our best endeavour to contemplate to realise the Dhamma. We should also have full confidence that we will surely be able to comprehend the genuine Dhamma by going through a course of meditation with diligence. May you all, who by virtue of the merits derived from fervently listening to this discourse on *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*, be able to practise meditation assiduously for the realisation of all truths beginning from the Four Noble Truths as embodied in this *Sutta* and speedily attain the bliss of *nibbāna*, a state that brings about the cessation of all miseries, through the progressive stages of insight knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> *Therāpadāna*, Ap.ii.546, v 320.

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