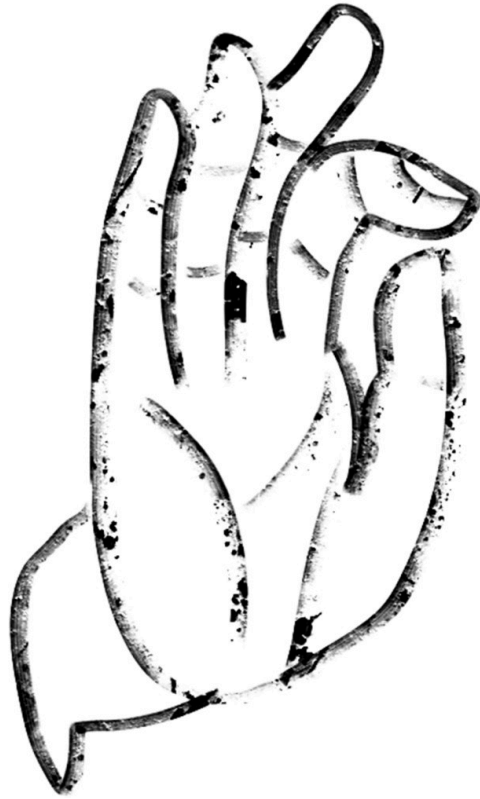


# From the Conditioned to the Unconditioned



Ven. Mankadawala Sudassana Thero

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MANKADAWALA SUDASSANA

ПЕРЕВОД И АДАПТАЦИЯ MAKSIM SULEIMANOV

РЕДАКТУРА IGOR MITROFANOV

ПРОВЕРКА И КОНСУЛЬТАЦИИ BHIKKHU RAKWANE GNANASEENA

ПРОВЕРКА И КОНСУЛЬТАЦИИ BHIKKHU RUSSIAYE ASAÑKHATA



# CONTENTS

1. [Translator's Note](#)  
Maksim Suleimanov
2. [Introduction](#)
3. [The Eye of the Dhamma](#)
4. [What is Being?](#)
5. [The Method](#)
6. [Practice](#)
7. [Conclusion](#)

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

MAKSIM SULEIMANOV

**B**hante Mankadawala Sudassana Thero is a highly renowned and respected monk, the founder of the Labunoruwakanda Forest Monastery (Aranya Senasanaya), who has had an immense influence on Sri Lankan Buddhism.

Unlike the more well-known national traditions of Theravada Buddhism, such as the Burmese and Thai traditions, the Sri Lankan tradition remains little known to the English-speaking reader — not least due to the language barrier: a significant part of its living heritage exists only in the Sinhalese language and has never before been translated into other languages. This book is an attempt to fill this gap.

One of the distinctive features of the Sri Lankan tradition is its inextricable link to the canon: Bhante Mankadawala Sudassana's sermons are saturated with quotes from the Pali Canon, with key gāthās cited in the original, translated, and analyzed in detail. At the same time, the teaching never remains merely speculative: despite its extraordinary depth, every sermon is practice-oriented — focused on how to make the Dhamma a genuine support in daily life. Correct view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) holds a special place in the sermons: the understanding of what we do, how we do it, why we do it, and how it

aligns with the Word of the Buddha. In this, the qualities of the Dhamma itself are revealed: it is well-expounded (svākkhāto), directly visible (sandiṭṭhiko), timeless (akāliko), inviting one to come and see (ehi-passiko), leading onward to the goal (opanayiko), and to be personally realized by the wise (paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti).

This book is based on a transcribed oral sermon delivered by Bhante in the Sinhalese language. We have worked to adapt it to make it available to a broader audience, while striving to carefully preserve both the spirit and the letter of the original.

Spoken language always requires adaptation when being converted into written form, and as a result of such processing, some errors inevitably creep into the text and the responsibility for them lies solely with the translator and the editor. Therefore, we ask the reader to treat this with understanding and write to [bhavana-book@inventati.org](mailto:bhavana-book@inventati.org) if you come across any typos or inaccuracies.

This sermon was addressed to prepared listeners well-versed in the Dhamma, which is why Bhante Sudassana frequently used abbreviated formulas and concise analogies understood by the audience. One of the most frequent instances is the pairing of "the seen and the heard" (a common abbreviated formula). This implies everything perceived through the sense spheres (āyatana): through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. In a similar manner, the Buddha in his instruction to Bāhiya spoke of the seen, the heard, the sensed, and the cognized, encompassing all six āyatanas within these concepts. The seen corresponds to the eye āyatana, the heard to the ear āyatana, the sensed to the nose, tongue, and body āyatanas, and finally, the cognized corresponds to the mind āyatana.

The language of the original itself belongs to the same category of difficulties. The Sinhalese language is related to Pali — the language in which the Pali Canon is recorded — as well as to Sanskrit. Many

Buddhist concepts in Pali are used in Sinhalese as they are or in their Sanskrit variant and do not require translation. Unfortunately, it is by no means possible to find exact and comprehensive equivalents in the English language for all terms, which is why we have added footnotes indicating various translation options and the original terms.

To derive the maximum benefit from this sermon, one needs a solid knowledge of the Dhamma, as well as an understanding of key Buddhist concepts. This foundation is detailed in the book "[Bhāvanā — The Art of The Mind](#)" by Bhante Rakwane Gnanaseeha. First and foremost, we recommend studying the chapters "[Anicca: Impermanence,](#)" "[Saṅkhāra loka: The World of Mental Formations,](#)" "[Saḷāyatana: Six Sense Spheres,](#)" and "[Aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo: Eighteen Elements.](#)" This book is available as a gift of Dhamma on [the website of the Cittaviveka Monastery.](#)

Immense gratitude to Bhante Rakwane Gnanaseeha and Bhante Russiave Asankhata, who consulted me throughout the entire translation process and verified the final text for its alignment with the Dhamma and the original source, as well as to Igor Mitrofanov, who undertook the meticulous editing and gave the book its final literary form. Without their involvement, this work would never have seen the light of day.

We publish this translation with the permission and blessing of Bhante Sudassana as a gift of Dhamma for free distribution for the benefit of all living beings. When copying material, please provide links to the websites [theravada.ru](#) and [samatha-vipassana.com](#).

## INTRODUCTION

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa!  
Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa!  
Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa!

Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Perfectly  
Enlightened One!  
Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Perfectly  
Enlightened One!  
Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Perfectly  
Enlightened One!

**virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi: “yaṃ kiñci  
samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ”ti.**

The stainless, immaculate Eye of the Dhamma arose:  
everything that is subject to arising is subject to cessation.

A sermon delivered on 04.10.2018 in Colombo, Sarana  
Road, at the residence of Mr. Nihal Rupasinghe.

Compassionate friends in the Dhamma, full of faith and wisdom! At this moment, you are all preparing to clarify for yourselves a portion of the true Dhamma, which was expounded out of compassion for us by the Buddha, the Supreme Teacher, the Giver of the Deathless. Therefore, I urge each of you to listen attentively to what I will point out, and to reflect deeply with wisdom upon what you hear.

We are journeying through an endless saṃsāra, trying to find happiness and peace of mind in our lives. Even in this life, in all our actions, treating the external material world as something real, we strive to find a way to eliminate suffering and achieve joy and well-being. Likewise, by performing various wholesome deeds and accumulating merit, we directly expect protection and tranquility in life. And even while trying to listen to and comprehend the Dhamma, we expect to gain an inner support.

Virtuous laypeople gathered here have been listening to sermons for a long time. Therefore, today I will offer you an approach that is slightly different from the usual one. Typically, people say, "Such-and-such venerable monk preaches very well, because through him one can quickly attain Nibbāna." Hearing that there is such a "good place" somewhere, we set off for it. We listen to such sermons with the mindset that they are the most beneficial and helpful for attaining Nibbāna. In other words, we have been searching everywhere in the world for that spiritual environment necessary for liberation.

However, my sermon today is different. I will try to explain a method by which one does not need to go anywhere in search of Nibbāna, but can realize it within oneself.

Instead of searching for Nibbāna in another person or place, let us find a method that allows us to see it within ourselves. That is precisely why I said: let us conduct not a formal sermon, but a dis-

cussion, drawing upon the level of your knowledge and understanding. Then the realization will be much deeper.

Another name for Nibbāna is *asaṅkhata* (the unconditioned, the uncompounded). Another name for saṃsāra is *saṅkhata*. The meaning of the word *saṅkhata* is that which has arisen from causes and conditions, the constructed, the compounded, that which is created by factors. For all conditioned phenomena to arise, there are 24 types of conditions (*paṭṭhāna*) pointed out by the Buddha. These are the ways in which the conditioned is formed.

*Asaṅkhata*, on the other hand, means something that is not created by conditions, not constructed by them, and has not arisen from causes. Everything that has arisen from causes [and conditions] disappears when those causes and conditions cease, does it not? Thus, Nibbāna is *asaṅkhata*, which means that which is not created by causes and not formed by conditions.

Is Nibbāna something that can or cannot be seen? It is something that can be seen. In that case, can a living person see Nibbāna, or a deceased one? A living one. This means it does not happen after death. It is precisely during life that one needs to see Nibbāna. Is the assertion that Nibbāna is realized after death appropriate in this context? After all, if this is a seeing, if this is a direct realization, then one must be alive for it, correct? It is not a seeing that opens up after death.

Thus, the seeing of Nibbāna is a realization that must be accomplished by a living person. And we must make an effort to properly understand the essence of this matter: what it actually means to see Nibbāna.

For now, we only have a concept of attaining Nibbāna. That is, there is a notion: "Having established oneself in morality (*sīla*), developing the mind through practices of tranquility (*samatha*), culti-

vating concentration (*samādhi*), and practicing insight (*vipassanā*), in time one will see Nibbāna."

But what is this Nibbāna that we must see? How are we to see it? If it is within us, at what moment in our lives does it manifest? And if it is necessary to see it, why do we not see it? What is it hidden by? Do we know at what point or under what life circumstances Nibbāna opens up? Have we ever understood this? No.

We only have the concept: "When you complete the three types of training — morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) — then you will see Nibbāna." But in reality, it is different. The question arises: how can one find the Path to Nibbāna if Nibbāna itself has not yet been seen? After all, you find a road or a path relative to the place you need to get to, do you not? There is no path just by itself. For example, if we say, "We need to get to Anuradhapura," then we find the path leading to it.

Likewise, there exist the cessation of suffering (*dukkha nirodha*) and the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha nirodha gāminī paṭipadā*). Only when you see cessation — Nibbāna — will the path leading to that seeing open up before you.

In that case, let us see how we can actually see Nibbāna. Let us consider at exactly what moment in our lives we must achieve this.

## THE EYE OF THE DHAMMA

So, let us now look at how the Buddha described the seeing of Nibbāna.

Can anything from the five aggregates<sup>1</sup> exist in Nibbāna: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*)? No, it cannot. Why? Because all of these are conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata dhamma*).

Can even a single one of the twelve sense bases (*āyatana*<sup>2</sup>) exist there: the eye base, the form base, the ear base, the sound base, and so on? No.

There are eighteen elements (*dhātu*<sup>3</sup>): the eye, forms, eye-consciousness; the ear, sounds, ear-consciousness, and so on. How many of these eighteen elements can be present in Nibbāna? Not a single one.

We must first recognize and see this unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), where nothing belonging to the aggregates (*khandha*), sense bases (*āyatana*), or elements (*dhātu*) is found. The Buddha pointed out a specific seeing so that people could see this. I am expounding all of this in full accordance with the texts of the canonical pure Dhamma. I am not adding a single interpretation of my own.

The Buddha pointed to it like this: "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation" (*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbam taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*). Thus "there arose the stainless, immaculate Eye of the Dhamma" (*virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi*).

The Buddha expounded this vision of Nibbāna in a concise, comprehensive, and systematic way.

"*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ*" — "whatever phenomenon (*dhamma*) exists that has the nature of origination (*samudaya*)." The word *samudaya* has meanings such as "origination," "arising," and "birth." They all describe the nature of coming into being. When we speak of a phenomenon that has the nature of origination, we mean a phenomenon whose inherent characteristic is to arise, to be born, or to appear.

"*Sabbam taṃ*" — "all that." All that is "*nirodhadhammaṃ*." When we say *nirodha*, we refer to such meanings as "cessation," "disappearance," "extinguishing" — by virtue of causes and conditions. On the other hand, the cause is called *samudaya* (origination).

If someone sees that all phenomena having the nature of origination also have the nature of cessation, then such a seeing is called "*virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi*" — the arising of the Eye of the Dhamma, free from the dust and stains of defilements (*kilesas*). Everything that has arisen exists only as phenomena having the nature of disappearance. If you, virtuous listeners, see that everything that arises disappears — it is precisely this seeing that is called the pure Eye of the Dhamma.

Now let us move on to the second stage. So, firstly, the seeing that everything that has arisen disappears — this is precisely what is called "seeing Nibbāna." This is pure seeing. I will explain this in more detail.

Well, what is "*samudayadhammaṃ*" (phenomena having the nature of origination, arising phenomena)? Regarding which specific phenomena must we see that they arise and disappear without remainder? The seeing of the disappearance of which specific phenomena allows us to say that we have beheld Nibbāna?

If we turn to the *Jātidhamma-vagga* from the fourth part of the Saṃyutta Nikāya or to the *Upanisinna-vagga* from the third part<sup>4</sup>, we will see that the Buddha gives a detailed explanation: "O bhikkhus, I will expound to you the phenomena having the nature of origination. I will expound to you the phenomena having the nature of birth. I will expound to you the phenomena having the nature of appearance."

The Buddha says: "O bhikkhus, what are the phenomena having the nature of origination?" And further points out: the eye is a phenomenon having the nature of origination; the form (*rūpa*) visible to the eye, the eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) arising due to both of them, the eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*) — everything that is within the sphere of vision — all of these are phenomena (*dhamma*) having the nature of origination.

If a person sees that this eye, and the forms visible to the eye, and the eye-consciousness, and the states born of them cease without remainder, then it is said of this: "All that is subject to cessation" (*sabbam taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*).

Look into this with your wisdom. Since time is limited, I will state this briefly.

In the exact same way, when a sound is heard, then the ear involved in that sphere, the sound, the states of consciousness (*citta*) associated with them, and the mental factors (*cetasika*) — all these phenomena (*dhamma*) possess the nature of origination.

When a smell is sensed by the nose, when a taste is experienced by the tongue, when a touch is perceived by the body, and when a mind-object (*dhamma-ārammaṇa*) is cognized by the mind — all of these are phenomena having the nature of origination.

If someone sees that each of these possesses the nature of cessation — it is precisely such a seeing that is called the seeing of Nibbāna. Such a person sees that everything that has arisen ceases. Why is this said?

Look: today, when you see some form (*rūpa*) with your eye, does it seem to you that this seen form arose and immediately disappeared? Or do you feel that it is there, that it continues to exist? It seems to you that it exists. If you see ten or a hundred different places with this eye, then everything you see — every visible form (and form is indeed a phenomenon having the nature of origination) — remains with you as something existing, as being (*bhava*<sup>5</sup>).

"*Sabbam taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*": do we then see that all of this ceases after it has been seen? No, we do not.

Every time, at every moment when the eye sees forms, it arises and ceases in accordance with the specific situation. But when we are sitting, standing, lying down, or walking, do we feel in these four postures that the eye arises and ceases? In reality, [instead] we feel that it *is* (exists).

If we feel that both the eye and the form exist, then we also perceive all their accompanying states of mind and mental factors as existing. It turns out that when we see a form, we do not realize how everything that arose in the field of this seeing ceases. For us, it remains as something existing.

If we hear a sound — and the arisen sound is generated by causes — do we see that it disappears without remainder? No. Someone said something to you. Did not the thought arise in you that very

moment: "Oh, so-and-so said such-and-such"? It did. Then did that sound disappear? If what was said disappeared without a trace, could those who insulted you even exist? Could their insults remain with us? No. So did the sound disappear? Did it disappear for us? No, for us, the sound remained.

In the exact same way, if you inhale a certain scent, does not the understanding arise in you that very moment: "This is the fragrance of such-and-such a flower"? It does.

If you taste something, are you able to recognize and identify it: "This is the taste of such-and-such"? You are.

If you feel a touch on your body, do you have the knowledge: "Such-and-such an object touched my body"? You do. If you think about something with your mind, does that person or that thing you are thinking about exist for you today? It exists. And does it seem to you that every arising thought (*vitakka*<sup>6</sup>) appears and disappears, or does it seem to you to be really existing? It seems to be really existing.

All of this indicates that you do not see Nibbāna. This means that you have not attained Nibbāna. Is it not clear that you do not see how all phenomena having the nature of origination cease? What the Buddha called the pure Eye of the Dhamma, unclouded by the dust and stains of defilements, does not refer to the origination itself. "*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*": if it is seen that everything having the nature of origination has completely ceased, it is precisely this seeing that is called the pure Eye of the Dhamma, free from the dust and stains of defilements.

If this Eye of the Dhamma has opened, then it is said: "*Cakkhuṃ udapādi, ñāṇaṃ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.*" The Eye arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, true vision arose, light arose.

If you see that everything that has arisen disappears without remainder, will even a single form (*rūpa*) remain for you? Will feeling (*vedanā*) remain? Will perception (*saññā*) remain? Will mental formations (*saṅkhāra*<sup>2</sup>) remain? Will consciousness (*viññāṇa*) remain? No.

When one sees that all that has arisen disappears without remainder, can the eye or form remain? Or the ear, or the nose? Can anything among the spheres of perception (*āyatana*) remain? No. When one sees that all that has arisen disappears without remainder, can anything among the eighteen elements (*dhātu*) remain — such as the eye element, the form element, the eye-consciousness element? No. When one does not see that what has arisen disappears without remainder, when one does not see Nibbāna, then in its place existence, becoming (*bhava*), is formed.

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**1** See the sermon by Bhikkhu Rakwane Gnanaseeha "[Pañcakkhandhā: The Five Aggregates](#)".

All footnotes are the translator's unless specified otherwise.

**2** The Teaching mentions divisions into six and twelve *āyatanas* (spheres or bases of perception). In the twelvefold division, each of the six *āyatanas* is divided into the base and its object. For example: the eye and forms (visible objects), the ear and sounds, and so on. See the sermon by Bhikkhu Rakwane Gnanaseeha "[Salāyatana: Six Sense Spheres](#)".

**3** See the sermon by Bhikkhu Rakwane Gnanaseeha "[Aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo: Eighteen Elements](#)".

**4** See [Samudayadhammasutta: Liable To Originate](#) (SN 22.126) and [Jātidhammāsutta: Subject to Birth](#) (SN 35.33).

**5 bhava:**

1: imp. (+nom) be!; you must be!

2: masc. being; becoming; existence

3: masc. state of existence; form of becoming

4: nt. state of existence; form of becoming

5: masc. well-being; prosperity; development

**6 vitakka**

1: masc. thought; reflection; pondering

2: masc. (abhi) application of mind; initial application of attention; (comm) mounting

3: nt. thought; reflection; pondering

7 See the sermon by Bhikkhu Rakwane Gnanaseeha "[Saṅkhāra: Mental Formations](#)".

## WHAT IS BEING?

**W**hat, then, is existence, becoming (*bhava*)? When everything seen and heard<sup>1</sup>, everything perceived through the six sense bases (*āyatana*) appears as "these [beings] exist, these [things] exist," a whole "mansion" (*vimāna*<sup>2</sup>) is built out of this around you. This is called being in the world of sensual desires, the realm of sensual becoming (*kāma-bhava*). It is precisely within this sensual being, this becoming, that the potential to experience the sufferings of aging and death is contained. Relatives, property, houses, personal vehicles, plots of land — all of this exists only as an aggregate of what you once saw and heard.

Thus, what we call the world exists only because we perceive three times as a reality: the past, the future, and the present. The world has no understanding of the fact that the past has ceased. The world has no understanding of the fact that the future has not yet arisen. The world is built not on the basis of understanding cessation. Although we do say that the past is something vanished, something that has ceased, in reality, we perceive it erroneously.

We operate from the premise: "Everything seen and heard still exists — only time has passed." Is that not how we understand the past? But if we turn to the true nature of things, can what we call the

cessation of the past really be called cessation, if everything seen and heard remains [in the mind] and only time passes? If the past had truly ceased, then what was seen would itself have to disappear, would it not? What was heard would also have to disappear, would it not? If we were to discover that cessation, we would attain Nibbāna. Yet the world does not comprehend this. The world is built upon ignorance (*avijjā*).

This is precisely why the concept of "the past" exists for the world. Nor can it be said that the future, which has not yet arisen, does not exist for the world. For the world, the future is completely real. The building you will go to work in tomorrow already exists for you today. This is precisely why you will go there tomorrow. Otherwise, if the future had not yet come, if there were no future — that building would not exist either.

Do you proceed from the premise that there is no such building, and that tomorrow you will call it into existence and use it? No, you live in an "existence" created by your mind out of a dead past and an as-yet-unborn future. It is precisely inside this mind-constructed existence that our world resides.

Becoming (*bhava*) is precisely such a state. That is why it is said that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is an illusion<sup>3</sup>.

Please do not lose this thought. Right now, I am giving you the most precious part, the very pinnacle of this teaching. If the path to Nibbāna, as it is usually imagined, is a road a hundred yojanas long, then I am explaining to you a method that can become a road shorter than a single yojana. Do you understand? This is the shortest path. But it must be well-grounded; you must clearly realize: "I will see Nibbāna on the day when this vision is born within me." Then you, virtuous listeners, will understand: from now on, Nibbāna can indeed be seen.

What does it mean to see Nibbāna? If at any moment you can see that everything that has arisen disappears completely without remainder, this is called the seeing of Nibbāna. However, today, virtuous listeners, we know that we have not yet seen Nibbāna: we ourselves are witnesses to this. How does this manifest? We do not see that everything that has arisen ceases. We know that everything that has arisen seems to us to be existing, and therefore we understand that we have not yet seen Nibbāna. It must also be realized that we do not have even a correct understanding, a knowledge (*ñāṇa*) of Nibbāna. Why?

Suppose you are now recalling your home, and I say: "That house which you saw is no longer there." Will your mind accept this? Will it find any resonance in your mind? Will there be even the slightest contact with this truth? No. This means that within us there is not even a tenth part of the knowledge of cessation (*nirodha-ñāṇa*). The entire world still appears real to us. This shows that there is not yet a trace of supramundane wisdom (*lokuttara-paññā*) within us. Our mind cannot even grasp the fact that what has arisen has ceased. We cannot even conceive of such a thing. That sphere in which everything is perceived as existing is precisely what is called existence, becoming (*bhava*).

Becoming and Nibbāna cannot exist together. You, virtuous listeners, know: if Nibbāna is seen, then becoming disappears, the world disappears<sup>4</sup>. If becoming is present, there is no Nibbāna.

See for yourselves: when the vision of the cessation of all that has arisen is absent in you, does existence take shape as something [permanently] existing? See for yourselves. And now, since becoming is present, see: do you perceive that what has arisen ceases? No. Therefore, if Nibbāna is not seen, only becoming remains. And as long as becoming is present, it is impossible to see Nibbāna.

For you operate from the deeply ingrained premise that things truly exist. Suppose you are sitting here and thinking that somewhere there stands a house which you cannot see right now. Suppose you approached it and it struck you that it has only just arisen, not having existed before. Would that not be a marvel to you? For in your mind the house would have "existed" even before you came to it. And if it seemed to you that the house had vanished without remainder when you left, that too would be a marvel to you. What exists must continue to exist — how then can it disappear?

Perhaps what I am speaking about right now is not yet completely clear. But I will continue — we are approaching a very important point.

Existence (*bhava*) has one defining characteristic: everything seen and heard, everything perceived through the sense spheres (*āyatana*), accumulates. This is similar to building a mansion (*vimāna*): the "mansion" of your existence is constantly expanding.

Let us recall the words of the Buddha: "Monks, this mind is radiant by nature. But it is defiled by incoming (*āgantuka*) defilements (*upakkilesa*)."

Let us analyze the analogy. Can we imagine how the furniture is arranged and how things are laid out in the bedroom of Mr. Rupasinghe? Truth be told, personally, I cannot. I cannot even recall it in my memory. This means that my mind right now is not defiled by these mental images (*nimitta*<sup>5</sup>); it is pure of them.

Consider this example. Right now, sitting here, I can try to recall this, but there is no such mental image in my mind. It is clear (radiant, transparent). If I enter that room, I will simply look at everything with my own eyes.

If after that I return and sit here again, will I be able to recall what things are there? Or not? I will. But did I initially have the ability to

recall it? No. In this place, the radiant mind abided without any mental image (*nimitta*).

Now look, has an incoming *nimitta* not been added [to the mind]? I merely made use of the eye and returned. The eye was added, the seen form (*rūpa*) was added, and now, sitting here, I can say: "The bed in his room stands in such-and-such place. The table next to the bed is in such-and-such place." If I wish, I can think about what is lying on the table. In that case, has not another incoming *nimitta* been added to the [initially] radiant mind, has it not become defiled?

In exactly the same way, on the day we were born, there was no such heap of mental images (*nimitta*) in our mind as "such and such beings exist, there are such and such things." At that time, becoming, existence (*bhava*) had not yet been formed. There were only the sense bases (*āyatana*), which had arisen by virtue of causes and conditions. And these sense bases also had the property of ceasing when the causes that produced them ceased. However, we had one single flaw — the only thing we possessed. It is that which is called ignorance (*avijjā*). It did not allow us to gain the vision that "what has arisen by virtue of causes ceases when those causes cease." And as our sensory faculties (*indriya*) gradually matured, ignorance added all of this to us, one thing after another.

[ Note by Bhikkhu Russiave Asankhata.

"Let us analyze the analogy. Can we imagine how the furniture is arranged and how things are laid out in the bedroom of Mr. Rupasinghe? Truth be told, personally, I cannot. I cannot even recall it in my memory. This means that my mind right now is not defiled by these mental images (*nimitta*); it is pure of them."

In this passage and further in the text, through similar examples and analogies involving the room and memories, the author is simply attempting to illustrate the stream of consciousness of a person who has just arisen in a new existence. The mind of such a person is not yet stained by conscious experiences arising from contacts of the sense bases that contain defilements associated with the volitional activity that arises in response to the contacts of the sense bases with their objects.

So far, such contacts do not occur due to the fact that the sense bases have not yet developed to a sufficient degree (for example, the eye has not yet fully formed in the womb) or the corresponding objects for the sense bases have not appeared (for example, there is no visible form for the eye base or there is no sound for the ear base). Consequently, conscious experiences that actively form wholesome or unwholesome kamma do not yet arise. In other words, becoming (bhava) is not yet taking place.

At such an early period of the stream of consciousness, the mind (citta) is said to be pure and radiant because the rebirth-linking consciousness (paṭisandhi-citta) of every being reborn in the human world is pure of unwholesome roots such as greed (lobha) and hatred (dosa). This is because human birth is always a wholesome rebirth, and the consciousness of such a rebirth is either endowed with the two wholesome roots of non-hatred (adosa) and non-greed (alobha), or with the three wholesome roots of non-hatred, non-greed, and non-delusion (amoha), or it is completely rootless (that is, without whole-

some or unwholesome roots). At the same time, the latent tendency toward ignorance (avijjā) is always present in a human being, even if their rebirth-linking consciousness is one with three roots. But since there are no unwholesome roots in it, it is considered pure and radiant.

And so, following such a rebirth-linking consciousness, throughout the entire life there arise and pass away the same kind of pure consciousnesses (bhavaṅga), identical to the rebirth-linking consciousness. They arise and pass away in a stream, one after another, being interrupted later on due to the contacts of the fully formed sense bases and giving way to the consciousnesses that arise during contacts with the sense bases. For example, upon the contact of the eye base and the visible form base. Due to the latent tendency toward ignorance, which the person has not yet been able to eradicate, consciousnesses with defilements already begin to arise. And with each such turn, the person becomes more and more established in ignorance regarding visible images, as if accumulating these images from the standpoint of ignorance and becoming ever more deeply rooted in them.

Based on this, the author presents his analogy. That is, a person who has not yet seen the things in Mr. Rupasinghe's room is the analogue of the bhavaṅga consciousness in the first moments after a new birth, when the sense bases have not yet been formed. When the sense bases are already formed and contact occurs between their corresponding objects and these bases, the corresponding consciousnesses arise — for example, those that see an image. This is analogous to

the author entering that room and seeing Mr. Rupasinghe's things. He did not know about these things, but now these things are in his memory. However, because ignorance is present, the consciousness resulting from the contact of the eye base with the eye object (that is, with the visible form) is not perceived as it truly is: simply as an arisen and immediately vanished perception of a visible form. What is seen immediately arises as an object for the mind base (mano-āyatana), which likewise, under the influence of ignorance, does not see this simply as the arising and passing away of the mind with its object.

The eye-consciousness and mind-consciousness arise and pass away, succeeding each other with tremendous speed. Due to the ignorance rooted in them, what is seen is perceived not merely as what is seen, but as a really present thing or being. And such objects — which do not exist in reality — accumulate in our mind as something real and persisting. It is precisely for this reason that the author further says: "I merely made use of the eye and returned. The eye was added, the seen form (rūpa) was added, and now, sitting here, I can say: 'The bed in his room stands in such-and-such place. The table next to the bed is in such-and-such place.' If I wish, I can think about what is lying on the table. In that case, has not another incoming nimitta been added to the radiant mind, has it not become defiled?"

The difference between our mind and the mind of an infant is as follows. When we think about Mr. Rupasinghe's room, our mind is already defiled anyway by this entire heap

of images, such as "house," "room," "a person named Rupasinghe," and so on, even though we do not have any nimitta in relation to what is inside the room.

It is very important to understand that with all these analogies, the author is simply illustrating this process. By no means is he calling for us to rid ourselves of contacts with the sense bases: this will in no way help us achieve liberation. Bringing oneself to the state of an infant in the womb does not lead to liberation. The author is simply showing the process of the mind's defilement. It is possible to rid oneself of such a process only by eradicating ignorance (*avijjā*), which is present even in an infant in the womb in the form of a latent tendency in their stream of consciousness. ]

Today our state of mind has been formed by "father-ignorance" through adventitious defilements (*āgantuka upakkilesa*). It binds us within the four great elements (*mahābhūta*<sup>6</sup>) so firmly, and this seems so real, that we find ourselves unable to refute it and free ourselves from it.

Today you cannot even dream that "my child" is nothing more than a thought (*vitakka*) in your mind. You simply do not perceive it in that way. If you did see this, there would be no world of sensual desire (*kāma-loka*).

I have given this example to show how becoming, being, is formed. You must understand this. At first, sitting here, I could not recall anything about that room. But had those things been in my mind originally, I would have been able to recall them. Obviously, there was no such mental image (*nimitta*) in my mind. The fact that I went and looked is merely the utilization of the eye and form. That is

all I resorted to. For this, no "person" or "soul" is required; the working of the eye is sufficient. And when I returned here, another incoming defilement was added.

Have not the *nimittas* now been added to me, allowing me to think, speak, and act in wholesome or unwholesome ways to any extent? For example: "The book on the table in that room is very good — I ought to go and take it."

I wanted to say precisely this: the becoming, being (*bhava*), which has formed within you today, arose because you did not see Nibbāna. And there is a reverse side: because there is becoming, you do not see Nibbāna. The principle of mutual conditionality operates here. It is like two reeds leaning against each other: the first reed stands due to the second, and the second due to the first. They do not fall because they support each other. In the same way, because Nibbāna is not seen, becoming exists. And because becoming exists, Nibbāna is not seen. They have become mutual conditions for each other (*aññamañña-paccaya*). Now, since everything is perceived as existing due to becoming, being (*bhava*), you do not see that what has arisen has ceased. And it is precisely because we do not see the cessation of what has arisen that you and I find ourselves in a situation where everything has formed as existing.

But ignorance (*avijjā*) is not eradicated all at once. First, the component of mental defilements (*kilesa*) — of craving (*taṇhā*) — ceases. That is, due to the process of becoming (*bhava*), the truth that everything that has arisen ceases remains unseen. Virtuous listeners, know this: you will not see Nibbāna until that mental state of yours which makes you believe "things exist, beings exist" has been completely removed. The understanding of the vision of Nibbāna must be very thoroughly absorbed.

If, upon seeing some form with the eye, you realize that when this form leaves the field of vision, what was seen vanishes without a trace — then your loved ones and possessions will no longer remain [existing] for you. This will happen of its own accord. Then the understanding will come: what has arisen has ceased.

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**1** Here and further below, when "the seen and the heard" is mentioned, it implies all spheres of perception (*āyatana*): eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. That is, everything visible, audible, felt, and perceived by the mind.

## **2** *vimāna*

1: nt. conceit; self-measurement; (comm) conceit or rebirth; lit. causing to think apart

2: nt. mansion; palace; lit. measuring

**3** See the *Phenapiṇḍūpama Sutta: A Lump of Foam* (SN 22.95):

*"Form is like a lump of foam,  
Feeling is like a water bubble,  
Perception is just like a mirage,  
Formations are like a banana trunk,  
The mind is like a magician's illusion —  
Thus explained the Kinsman of the Sun."*

**4** "Nibbāna" literally translates as "extinguishment," see "[On the Translation of the Word 'Nibbāna'](#)" by Bhikkhu Russiave Dhammanissita, and also "[Upasamānussati: Recollection of The Peace of Nibbāna](#)" by Bhikkhu Rakwane Gnanaseeha.

## **5** *nimitta*

1: nt. mark; sign; symbol; indication; lit. measured down

2: nt. image; mental image; mental representation; lit. measured down

3: nt. sign; omen; portent; lit. measured down

4: nt. (interpretation of) signs; omens; portents; lit. measured down

5: nt. cause; reason; foundation; basis; lit. measured down

6: nt. meditation object; theme of contemplation; mental hyperlink; lit. measured down

7: nt. hint; suggestion; clue; lit. measured down

**6** The four material elements, or four great elements (*cattāro mahā-bhūtā*):

1 The earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*), manifesting as hardness or softness.

2 The fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), manifesting as heat or cold, temperature.

3 The wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*), manifesting as motion or pressure.

4 The water element (*āpo-dhātu*), manifesting as cohesion, fluidity.

Wherever there are the four great primary elements, there will also be four dependent (derivative) elements (*upādāya-rūpa*):

1 Color (*vaṇṇa*).

2 Odor (*gandha*).

3 Taste (*rasa*).

4 Nutritive essence (*ojā*).

These four dependent elements are always present when the four great primary elements are there; they are always together.

These elements never exist separately in reality, which is why they are called a form group, a materiality group (*rūpa-kalāpa*). One could say that these are the smallest particles of matter. Each *rūpa-kalāpa* consists of the four great elements (*cattāro mahā-bhūtā*) and the four dependent (derivative) elements (*upādāya-rūpa*).

## THE METHOD

In order for Nibbāna to be seen, becoming must cease. How, then, does becoming cease? How are we to free ourselves from that mental state in which we believe: "There are things and beings"? How is this becoming, being, to be eliminated?

Existence, becoming, cannot be removed simply by thinking about it. It can be eliminated in only one single way. "*Upādāna-nirodhā bhava-nirodho*" — with the cessation of clinging (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*) ceases. If you do not take these five aggregates subject to clinging (*pañca-upādāna-khandha*) as an object of clinging, the liberation from this becoming will occur of itself. This ring that has closed around you will open up naturally. For this, you need to do only one thing.

Do not strive to see Nibbāna. For that, becoming (*bhava*) must be removed. Do not strive to remove becoming — remove clinging (*upādāna*).

What is clinging, attachment (*upādāna*)? When you take everything that arises in the mind as real and wander within those images — that is what is called dwelling in clinging. When the mind recalls an image, you accept it: "Ah, I have remembered my child, I have remembered my wife, I have remembered my friend."

When, through clinging to a doctrine of self (*attavāda-upādāna*<sup>1</sup>) or through clinging to sensuality (*kāma-upādāna*), the objects that keep coming to mind are accepted as real — that mental condition is precisely what is called "taking hold of the five clinging-aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) as objects of clinging." As long as that disposition is present in our mind, the things that have been seen and heard keep accumulating. The environment in which the things that have been seen and heard "exist" is not let go of.

Very well. How are we to free ourselves from the clinging produced by craving (*taṇhā*)? How then are we not to take as real everything that appears in the state of clinging? In what way does this letting go occur? For there must be a method for this as well.

The reason here lies in ignorance, the inability to see the true nature of the aggregates that have arisen as a result of past kamma (*vipāka-khandha*). It is precisely because of the inability to fully comprehend the five aggregates subject to clinging that we continue to act out of clinging. Not seeing the truth about these aggregates is the very reason why we perceive them as a person or a being.

Thus, for one who has not fully comprehended the five aggregates subject to clinging, who does not know and see them as they truly are — for such a person, there simply exists no other realm into which they could move. They are left with no choice but to take each arising mental image (*nimitta*) for reality — as an object of sensual desire, as a being — and to act based upon that. Remember this well, and I will continue the explanation.

For a person in the world who does not know and see the true nature of the aggregates (*khandha*), there exists only one way to perceive each arising mind object (*ārammaṇa*), each thought that comes to mind. And that way is to take any object arising in the mind exclusively as a [real] thing or as a being, a person.

If one perceives everything in this way and, based on this, thinks, speaks, and acts, then becoming (*bhava*) is inevitably formed. And if becoming has arisen, then it is no longer seen that what has arisen ceases. And Nibbāna is then not seen. Nibbāna turned out to be unseen because of becoming. Becoming arose because of clinging (*upādāna*). Clinging arose because of the non-comprehension of the aggregates. This [constant conditioning] continuously takes place inside us of its own accord.

The Buddha, however, appeared in the world and taught us what the five aggregates subject to clinging actually are. He showed what the form aggregate subject to clinging (*rūpa-upādānakkhandha*) is. We have taken and are holding form as an object of clinging, but the Buddha showed it as it truly is.

"*Cakkhum anattaṃ, rūpaṃ anattaṃ*" — the eye is not-self, form is not-self. Thus the Buddha pointed out the *anattā*<sup>2</sup> nature of visible forms. And having shown that all visible forms possess this characteristic, the Tathāgata did not stop there. He passed down to us the practice of mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*) within the framework of *satipaṭṭhāna*<sup>3</sup>, so that we could investigate [forms] ourselves and see whether there is an *attā* there or not.

We, for our part, do not stop at the fact that the Buddha preached to us the *anattā* nature of form, but we thoroughly investigate form ourselves. What do we discover? That here there are thirty-two impure parts (*kuṇapa*, corpse-like parts): head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, and so on. If we take each part individually, then it becomes clear to us that in none of them is there a being or a person. This body consists merely of thirty-two such groups. Therefore, we also realize that these are merely phenomena (*dhamma*), which do not constitute beings or a person.

We also examine this from the perspective of the elements. We see that in this body there are only the elements of hardness (*paṭhavī*), fluidity (*āpo*), motion (*vāyo*), and temperature (*tejo*). Not simply because the Buddha preached it so — we ourselves come to understand the structure of these forms (*rūpa*, materiality). We see that the thirty-two impure parts are indeed the four great primary elements. And it also becomes clear to us that not a single one of these four primary elements constitutes a being, a person, or an *attā*.

Let us proceed further. A supposition might have arisen within us: although materiality (form) itself is *anattā* by its very nature, it could still have arisen from some cause that has an *attā* at its basis. Therefore, the Buddha pointed out to us the cause of the arising [of form] as well. Materiality has been formed due to food and drink: rice, bread, peas, beans, and so forth. In this way, he showed that even in the cause itself there is no *attā* whatsoever. And we have realized this not simply because the Buddha said so. Having investigated this matter, we ourselves have understood that this is the truth.

In this lies our only solace, our only relief. This means that now we must comprehend the Truth through our own experience. It is precisely here that we must apply wisdom. We have seen: whatever a material form (*rūpa*) may be, every form is "the four great elements and matter derived from the four great elements" (*cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ*). That is, it is the four great elements and the derivative matter that has arisen on their basis. If we say "form," is there anything else in it besides these characteristics: *anicca*<sup>4</sup>, *dukkha*<sup>5</sup>, and *anattā*?

Whether it be form in the past, future, or present, internal or external — if we investigate any form and see that it is the four great elements, or derivative matter (*upādāyarūpa*), or the thirty-two impure parts of the body, and that it is devoid of an *attā*, then a concise

answer comes to us. What exactly is it? Let us take the aggregate of form (*rūpakkhanda*). The true nature of all these forms scattered everywhere is that they are *anattā dhammā* — impersonal phenomena, and not beings or persons. The answer comes that there is only one single place that creates the illusion of an *attā* out of them and presents them as belonging to a person or a living being. This place is the mind base (*manāyatana*).

This answer gives the practitioner a concise vision whenever something is recalled as a being or a person. They can establish themselves in this Truth. Now there is no longer any need for them to go through everything one by one again, saying [to themselves of each part]: "*Anattā*." They have taken this answer and applied it in practice.

If any materiality is *anattā*, if it is merely the four great primary elements and the matter derived from them, then [for the practitioner] there can be no forms of gods, there can be no forms of humans, there can be no forms of *yakkhas* (spirits) or forms of *pretas* (hungry ghosts). Why? Because the understanding of the Truth of any form has now become firmly established in his mind.

He has received the answer: the tendency to make some forms into "gods," others into "humans," "pretas," "yakkhas," and to generate the corresponding states of mind — all of this lies within himself. He has come to the understanding that this entire world is constructed through one single base — the mind base (*manāyatana*).

Now there is no need to investigate many different places. He knows: if something is recalled as a being or a person, this occurs exclusively at the level of mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*) with the support of ignorance and other defilements. Even when, upon looking with the eye, it seems to be a person, the very perception of this person, of this *attā*, abides only at the level of mind-consciousness.

From that day on, the practitioner knows: "This means I must guard my mind." The entire work for him has been reduced to one thing: he needs to watch his own mind, to bear responsibility for it.

Whatever thoughts may arise, they are born precisely from the position of a "person," a "being." The practitioner knows: to take thoughts arising from such a perception as the truth and to think, speak, and act on their basis means to abide in clinging to the five aggregates.

If a person perceives a thought that has arisen in the mind from the position of remembering someone real and feels compelled to react to it, it means that this mind object (*ārammaṇa*) has subjugated them. It means that the illusion has subjugated such a person. It has forced them to think, speak, and act. That is, it has forced them to cling (*upādāna*).

If clinging takes place, becoming, existence (*bhava*), arises. When becoming arises, Nibbāna is not seen. But now the practitioner knows that there is something else, distinct from everything before. He has gained a foundation, a ground (*bhūmi*) so that the arising objects do not become an object of clinging. Previously, there was no such method.

In what does this method consist? Every form is merely the four great elements or derivative matter. Therefore, that which is recalled as a "person" is merely a product of the mind (*manomaya*), merely a thought (*vitakka*). The practitioner now has the strength to recognize this in life. This Truth is his one and only power, his refuge.

No matter how much it is seen that there are children, there is a wife, there is a husband, there are various people, there are relatives and friends — the practitioner knows: whatever forms exist, have existed, or will exist, in them there is only *anattā* — impersonal existence. The vision of this is his strength.

He does not need to look into the past, he does not need to peer into the future. He does not need to take apart the form seen by the eye, or the sound heard by the ear. The Truth of every materiality is one and the same.

And when he obtains this answer — that the tendency to recall every form as a being, as a person, exists only in the mind (*mano*) and is mind-made (*manomaya*) — when this answer becomes his own, then to help defeat Māra, he needs only to turn to the direct experience of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

This means that you will find yourself in the power of clinging if an arising thought becomes real for you and prompts you to think, speak, and act based upon it — and if you yield to this prompt. This is how becoming (*bhava*) is created, because of this Nibbāna becomes unseen, and you are carried away toward aging and death. This is how you fall into Māra's trap.

But if, when an object arises in the mind, you direct your attention according to *satipaṭṭhāna* and see: "Is this form not merely the four primary elements?" — or if, when a thought arises, you see: "Is this thought not impermanent (*anicca*)?" or: "Is this thought not *anattā*?" — or simply realize: "After all, it is just a fleeting thought that has arisen, is it not?" — then, virtuous ones, you will be able to save yourselves.

But one must understand well why we call an arising thought impermanent (*anicca*). When something is recalled right now, that which was recalled before is already gone. And when something else is recalled a moment later — will what is being recalled now remain? No. This means that no matter how strongly we take [this thought] for reality, as soon as a new memory arises, it immediately disappears. It is precisely for this reason, keeping this truth in mind, that we say: "Impermanent."

Even if forms still perceived as beings and persons arise in the mind, the direct experience of *satipaṭṭhāna* developed up to this point comes into play. You can realize the true nature of form like this: "No, there can be no forms belonging to beings. Any form is merely the four great elements." Or: "Is this not just a thought that has arisen in this mind?" Or else: "Is this not just thinking generated by this mind?" Whichever way and to whichever arising image (*nimitta*) you apply the contemplation of the true nature of things, you will be able to attain liberation.

Why is this so? How exactly does this liberation occur? Let us assume you look at the *anattā* nature in each arising thought, in which there is neither a person nor a being. Or let us suppose that you look at each arising thought as impermanent. Or else you look at it as unreal in the sense that it is merely the four great primary elements, merely derivative matter. Why look at it in this way? Does Nibbāna become visible because of this?

One must remember firmly: this way of seeing is a skillful method. The practitioner knows: "As long as I look at the arising image as impermanent, I do not allow it to become a reality for me, and I do not let it prompt me into thoughts, words, and actions based upon it." This is the method. As soon as you stop remembering that this image is impermanent, it immediately becomes real for you, prompting you to think, speak, and act. It prompts you to generate passion (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) — that is, to cling (*upādāna*). And you know: if this happens, becoming (*bhava*) is formed.

So, here is the technique that helps one avoid acting under the influence of clinging in relation to an arising object. Virtuous listeners, as soon as an object surfaces in the mind, look at it like this: "This

thought is impermanent." Or else realize: "This is [merely] a thought."

For now, you remain at the level of "a house was recalled," "a child was recalled." If you begin to apply this method in practice and train yourself to recognize any thoughts precisely as thinking, as the directing of the mind toward an object (*vitakka*), as merely thoughts — what then will be your benefit and profit?

The point is not that you will immediately see Nibbāna, but that internally, on the part of your own mind, you will not get involved or enter into a connection with this object through thoughts, speech, and actions.

The object that arises in the mind is one thing. To recall what has been seen is [another thing, it is simply] a property of the mind. Here lies the chief danger: if in that very moment you fail to establish mindfulness, recollection (*sati*), you will become secondarily entangled with that object through thought, speech, and action.

What is the main feature of *satipaṭṭhāna*? "*Kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā-domanassam*" — "He dwells contemplating the body in the body, with the resolve to overcome the defilements of his mind through wisdom and mindfulness, neither being carried away by the world nor rejecting it."

What is "the world"? It is the world of the five aggregates subject to clinging. It is everything that you recall as existing, as actually present people and things. The cause for the arising of these memories and thoughts is becoming (*bhava*). That is, it is precisely because of the tendency [to believe] that such-and-such people and such-and-such things exist, that they are recalled by you, venerable ones.

When an object arises in the mind, in most cases we ponder it until either greed (*lobha*) or ill will (*dosa*) arises, and only after that do

we let it go. That is, the letting go occurs on the basis of clinging (*upādāna*).

See what harm you cause yourself every time you let go of a thought only after bringing it to the level of greed or ill will conjoined with clinging. In what does this harm consist? In the fact that fetters are naturally formed within you: "Everything seen and heard exists."

Clinging to the five aggregates subject to clinging is precisely that state of mind in which you take everything that arises within it for reality and act based upon it.

As long as you act in this way, becoming (*bhava*) does not cease. What flaw accompanies it? The mind never inclines toward the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), toward the realization that what has arisen has ceased. Nibbāna is not seen this way. When you leave behind what has arisen, when you step away from it, the accumulation of everything perceived through the six sense bases (*āyatana*) still occurs by itself, without any effort. Why does this happen? The failure to see that everything which has arisen ceases is ignorance (*avijjā*). And ignorance becomes a condition for volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*).

Ignorance becomes a condition for what has been perceived to imprint itself within you as something that really exists. If such mental images (*nimitta*) persist, if ignorance becomes a condition for volitional formations, then what, in turn, do volitional formations become a condition for? For rebirth-consciousness. Then it will be impossible to stop repeated birth and the acquisition of another such body endowed with consciousness.

If Nibbāna is not seen — what else remains? If true knowledge, vision (*viññā*), does not arise, then ignorance (*avijjā*) remains.

Ignorance means that a person does not see that everything which has arisen ceases.

If there is ignorance, then everything that has arisen is perceived as existing, and kammic signs (*kamma-nimitta*) accumulate within the person.

And if this is so, it is impossible to stop the repeated acquisition of a body by means of rebirth-consciousness. Birth will inevitably occur.

If there is birth, then aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, and despair will inevitably occur in life.

In order for there to be no aging, death, and other sufferings of *saṃsāra*, birth must cease.

In order for birth to cease, *kamma* must cease.

In order for *kamma* to cease, ignorance must cease.

And what is needed for ignorance to cease? True knowledge, vision (*vijjā*), must arise.

"*Yam kiñci samudaya-dhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodha-dhammaṃ*": whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation. If knowledge arises that everything which has originated by virtue of causes and conditions disappears with the disappearance of those causes, then with the arising of such knowledge (*vijjā*), ignorance (*avijjā*) ceases. With the cessation of ignorance, volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*) cease. Such is the law of Dhamma, such is the nature of things (*dhammatā*): if someone has seen Nibbāna, they attain the cessation of the sufferings of *saṃsāra* through their own experience. If Nibbāna is seen — birth definitely ceases.

The best evidence of Nibbāna and the only way to realize it are within you. This is the cessation of this very existence, becoming (*bhava*), which has been formed from the position that "things and beings exist." It is precisely because of this condition that Nibbāna is

not seen today. The closest, most immediate cause of this non-seeing is existence. And it was built up in the first place because Nibbāna was not seen. Therefore, the closest cause of existence is the absence of Nibbāna. That very existence, which was built up due to the non-seeing of Nibbāna, has obscured it.

To let go of this existence, you, virtuous ones, need the world of clinging to cease being real [for you]. As long as the world of sensual desires (*kāma-loka*) remains real for you, you, virtuous ones, will never be liberated from the world of sensual desires.

Yet for you, virtuous ones, the world of sensual desire has become reality. But there is one possibility to swiftly free yourselves from this. This entire sensual world has become real for you only within the bounds of your thoughts. In the element of solidity (*pathavī-dhātu*) there is no living, real person such as you perceive. In the elements of cohesion (*āpo*), temperature (*tejo*), and motion (*vāyo*) there is neither the *attā* nor the person you think of. The mental factor of feeling (*vedanā cetasika*) arising from contact belongs to no person and no being. The mental factor of perception (*saññā cetasika*) arising from contact is neither a person nor a being. The mental factor of volition (*cetanā cetasika*) arising from contact is neither a person nor a being.

Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), arising on the basis of mentality-and-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*), is conditioned by causes. And since it is neither a person nor a being, these aggregates (*khandha*) are *anattā*. This is so because the causes are *anattā*. Through this Truth it becomes clear that for you sensual desire comes alive exclusively within the bounds of thoughts accompanied by defilements (*kilesa-vitakka*).

In this lies our exceptional good fortune today. If sensual desire were truly inherent in the aggregates themselves, then for the sake of liberation, you would have to completely eliminate these forms

themselves. And that would be impossible. However, there is no poison or defilement within the aggregates themselves. If you can recognize the arising thoughts that, due to your ignorance of the Truth, make the whole world real, then clinging (*upādāna*) will be cast off. But the most difficult thing for us in this world is the inability to see a thought arising in the mind simply as a thought; for it is precisely the thought arising in the mind that clings to the four great elements.

The concept of "child" is merely a fleeting thought that has arisen in your mind at this very moment. However, ignorance (*avijjā*) prevents you from seeing this thought as a thought. It is firmly attached to the external form consisting of the four great primary elements and inclines toward it. What is called the descending of mentality-and-materiality (*okkanti nāma-rūpaṃ*) means that the mind is fully directed toward form, toward becoming. All of this is perceived from the position of: "I have remembered children who really exist."

But this is so only until a person reaches the level where they can recognize [each] thought arising in the mind simply as a thought arising in this very mind. This period is the most difficult. At this time, effort must be made. You will certainly have to apply some technique. When you think you are dealing with a person or an individual, point out to yourself: "This is just the external four great elements." Or: "Is this not just a thought?" Or, upon such recollection, you should note: "This is merely a thought. What I saw has already ceased by the time of recollection." Or you need to use the understanding of the impermanence of the thoughts themselves. You need to structure the practice in such a way that your reactivity toward thoughts steadily weakens.

If you do this, after a while, the tendency to cling firmly to the four great primary elements will begin to weaken rapidly. You will be able to easily recognize without any effort: "This thought has

arisen within myself. I myself have generated this thought with my mind." From that moment on, as you contemplate the impermanence of each arising thought, immense joy and inspiration will appear.

It is precisely when you reach the level of seeing the impermanence of each arising thought that the quality of non-clinging to the five aggregates subject to clinging will manifest in you. But even before reaching this level, clinging will not remain the same — it will inevitably diminish. When this happens, becoming (*bhava*) will cease. And when becoming ceases, the vision of Nibbāna becomes no longer just a hope or a desire.

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**1 Attā** — self, soul, essence, personality. By *attā* is meant a certain eternal, unchanging, indivisible "I" or self, subject to complete and absolute control. In Theravāda Buddhism, no such "I," no such self (or soul), exists — it is denied: *anattā*. It cannot be found either in direct experience or through analysis, as the Buddha demonstrates in the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta.

**2 Anattā** — the absence of an *attā*, that is, of some permanent, indivisible self under our control. *Anattā* means that neither in the body, nor in the mind, nor beyond them can anything be found that could be considered one's absolute essence, an unchanging person that would exist on its own and represent a really existing self or soul. *Anattā* is translated as selflessness, impersonality, soullessness, "not-self." Along with impermanence (*anicca*) and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), it constitutes the three characteristics of existence.

**3 Satipaṭṭhāna** — foundations of mindfulness. This is the most important Buddhist practice, a detailed description of which can be found in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22). *Satipaṭṭhāna* is an indispensable element of the Buddhist teaching; it is mentioned as the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path (Right Mindfulness).

**4 Anicca**: impermanence, changeability. This is the first of the three characteristics of existence. It is precisely because of impermanence that all phenomena are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anattā*). See the sermon by Bhikkhu Rakwane Gnanaseeha, "[Anicca: Impermanence.](#)"

The impermanence of objects is their arising, proceeding, and altering, or the disappearance of those things that have already arisen. Impermanence means that these things are never in any prolonged, unchanging state, but from moment to moment continuously undergo changes.

Impermanence is the central feature of all conditioned phenomena, whether they are material or mental, gross or subtle, internal or external. The universality of the impermanence of existence is also frequently described within the framework of the five aggregates (*khandha*), the twelve sense bases (*āyatana*), the eighteen elements (*dhātu*), etc. Only unconditioned Nibbāna is permanent.

Insight leading to the first stage of awakening (stream-entry) is often expressed in the cognition of impermanence, that is, a profound understanding of the thesis: "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation" (see SN 56.11).

The Buddha's last words were an address to the monks: "All conditioned things are subject to decay. Strive on with diligence" (see *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, DN 16).

**5 Dukkha:** usually this concept is translated as "suffering," but a more accurate translation would be burdensomeness or oppressiveness. It is that which is difficult to bear. It can be physical pain, dissatisfaction, change, and even the very acts of perception — everything that leads to the agitation of the mind.

Below is the definition of dukkha given by the Buddha in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.

*And this, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering (dukkha):*

*birth is suffering,*

*aging is suffering,*

*illness is suffering,*

*death is suffering,*

*association with the unpleasant is suffering,*

*dissociation from the pleasant is suffering,*

*not getting what one wants is suffering,*

*in short, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.*

## PRACTICE

**E**ven if you are busy with chores all day, set aside at least half an hour to try to recognize your thoughts. Seclude yourself for half an hour and see what a vast area the mind covers during this time, recalling all kinds of topics and affairs.

If you are skillful, during this half hour you will not allow a single thought to subjugate you. This means that you will not take a single thought for reality and will not think, speak, and act on its basis. If, however, you take a thought for reality and [under its influence] begin to think, speak, and act, then it will mean that it is skillful and you are weak — for it somehow managed to force you into this. You yourself will know: the thought won and you lost, or vice versa.

But if, during this half hour, you fight back against each arising thought: "This is just a thought, this is impermanent, this is *anattā*, what was seen has already ceased" — if you continue to fight back in this manner, then for this half hour you will not be under the influence of clinging (*upādāna*). This means that you will slightly loosen the grip of becoming (*bhava*). You will advance a little toward seeing that "what has arisen ceases."

Observe your mind like this for half an hour.

During this half hour, when thoughts arise, two paths open up before you: either you live conquering and subjugating the arising thoughts time after time, or you live submitting and yielding to them time after time.

If you live conquering each arising thought, then this is the path of the Buddha — the path leading to inevitable Nibbāna. If, however, you live submitting to each arising thought, this is the path of Māra, the path of inevitable wandering in saṃsāra.

Within these thirty minutes you will understand for yourselves to whom you are more devoted — to the Buddha or to Māra.

Anyone can put this into practice. But the more "weapons" you have, the more successfully you can fight Māra. If someone has bows, arrows, swords, and spears — when one does not help, he uses another.

In the same way, the more knowledge you have about the aggregates (*khandha*), elements (*dhātu*), and sense bases (*āyatana*), the easier it is for you not to yield to arising thoughts. You will be able to subjugate these mental images (*nimitta*) by examining each thought [as a thought] from one perspective or another.

But if your weapons are few, then you will have to fight with bare hands. Without this knowledge you will be able to rely only on your own effort (*virīya*) to avoid falling under the power of the object. And that is no easy matter. Do you understand what I mean?

Take care of precisely this. Set everything else aside for now.

However, whichever method you choose in order not to yield to a thought, understand well: what you are doing is merely a skillful means. It is not the vision of Nibbāna itself. What, then, is it for?

When I fight back against each arising thought in this manner, I block the opportunity for mental images to become reality and to generate passion (*rāga*), ill will (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). The prac-

titioner understands: "These efforts are necessary so that clinging (*upādāna*) does not arise."

When you look at an arising thought as *anicca* — impermanent — as *dukkha*, as *anattā*, or when you see: "This is not mine, I am not in this" — all of this in itself is not yet Nibbāna.

If a person looks at it in this way, for what purpose do they do it? They know perfectly well: every time one fails to recognize and expose the mental image (*nimitta*) arising in the mind, this mental image gets the upper hand and subjugates them.

How does the mental image do this? It turns the perceived into reality, as if it were a genuinely existing person or thing, and prompts the practitioner to think, speak, and act on the basis of it. Thus, it carries the person along, leading them to suffering or pleasure. The mental image drags them in until greed (*lobha*) and aversion (*dosa*) are fully formed [in the mind].

A person knows that remaining in such a state at this level is precisely clinging (*upādāna*). They know about the danger of clinging — that it leads to becoming (*bhava*). The realization comes to the practitioner that within ourselves, that very environment is being formed in which all seen and heard beings and things allegedly really exist. Thus, the flaw of becoming is understood. As long as it exists, Nibbāna, the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), is not seen. And then, it is not seen that everything which arises is subject to cessation. It is not seen that both the eye and the seen image cease.

The practitioner knows: if Nibbāna is not seen, the signs of kamma (*kamma-nimitta*) are formed. If they are present, one will have to go to rebirth again. And if there is rebirth, then aging, death, suffering, and the four lower worlds will not leave their life. In order for aging, death, and other sufferings not to occur, one must not be born. In order not to be born, signs of kamma must disappear. In order for

them to disappear, everything that arises — for example, when using the eye — must not be held onto. Having looked at a form, one must not hold onto it.

It is impossible to see that what has arisen has ceased merely by knowing about it [abstractly]. One must reach the level of direct vision. What does direct vision mean? When we look in a mirror and walk away from it, do we need to make an effort to see that the reflection has disappeared? Do we do this intentionally? Do we specifically contemplate that it is gone? Do we investigate it in any way? No, it is simply an obvious reality. To realize cessation (*nirodha*) means, virtuous ones, that when you have looked at a form with the eye and turned your gaze away, it is obvious to you that it has disappeared without a trace. Such a mind is always directed only toward Nibbāna.

"O monks, just as the rivers Ganges, Yamunā, Aciravatī, and Sarabhū flow eastward, head eastward, incline eastward, tend eastward, so too, O monks, the Noble Eightfold Path flows toward Nibbāna, heads toward Nibbāna, inclines toward Nibbāna, tends toward Nibbāna." Such a mind is always directed toward Nibbāna.

Where is your mind directed today? It is directed toward saṃsāra. You do not see that what has arisen ceases; it appears to be existing. You are turned toward saṃsāra, inclined toward it, and burdened by it. What will happen if you turn toward Nibbāna, incline toward it, and strive toward it? Why and for what purpose do we strive toward Nibbāna? What is the necessity of Nibbāna? It lies in two things: so that, having been born again, one does not experience the sufferings of aging and death, and to completely cease repeated births altogether. So that, by not being born, one is liberated from the sufferings of saṃsāra, and to be liberated from the sufferings of becoming in this very life.

Look at the extent to which these thoughts have become a reality for us. And there is a reason for this: in truth, we do not fully understand the element of sensual desire (*kāma-dhātu*). That is precisely why we remain in this world of sensual desires (*kāma-loka*).

Suppose, virtuous listeners, you see this table in a dream. If it is exactly the same image as you see in front of you now, then what is the difference between them? They are identical, aren't they? How then does one become "reality" and the other a "dream"? The vision of the table is the same — which means that if the first is a dream, then the second must also be a dream. And if the first is reality, then the second must also be reality.

If the image is the same, why is one considered a dream and the other reality? Both images are external. One is external relative to the eye, the other is external relative to the mind. The only difference lies in the four great elements that bring the sensual experience (*kāma*) to life.

One of these images becomes reality for you solely because you feel the possibility of touching it. And that dream does not become reality for you only because it seems as though it cannot be touched and felt. When you see that this visible derived form (*upādāya-rūpa*) is not connected to the primary elements (*mahā-bhūta*), at that very moment, this sensual world will naturally, without any effort, become a dream for you.

Do you know that even now it is impossible to touch the visible? You do not see that sense base where touching takes place. Where there is seeing, there is no touching. Thus, there is a certain insight in this: if I dwell where seeing occurs, then the place where I dwell is the seen itself.

Wherever you may be right now, virtuous ones, you are at this moment dwelling within what appears to you, you are dwelling in

the seen. [You are dwelling with the seen.] This is quite a profound subject. You have unwittingly embedded yourself in the seen. This is why the Buddha said to Bāhiya: "Therefore, Bāhiya, if at some moment the seen becomes for you merely the seen, then you will not be in the seen and the seen will not be with you. Then, Bāhiya, you will be neither in this world nor in another world nor in between the two. This is itself the end of suffering."

Seeing that what has arisen ceases means that what has arisen cannot be taken and carried away. The practitioner knows well that one must look at the seen, leaving it right where it is seen. If, however, the seen is perceived as existing, as reality, then a person can carry it away, build upon it, appropriate it. It is precisely within this [perception] that the world is formed.

When you reach the level at which you use what has arisen while leaving it where it arose, and when in the seen there is only the seen (*ditṭhe ditṭha-mattam*), then you will not be within it.

What is the reason? Perhaps today you do not yet realize that you dwell within what you see. You dwell in what you see. You are in what you see. The very place where you are — that is what appears to you.

Here is the proof. When you return home and are asked, "Where have you been all this time?" — is it not that very setting you saw which you will describe in response? If you are asked where you were, what evidence will you have that you were there? You will describe the surroundings you saw with your eyes, saying, "I was in such-and-such a place." To indicate the place of your presence, you use the setting you saw. You use the seen. This is precisely what shows that you are inside the seen. Do we need to examine this further? No[, everything is already obvious].

The Arahants of the past also had children, as well as duties and responsibilities toward their children. And [yet] their lives extinguished, cooled down<sup>1</sup>. But this happened not because they went through life, pushing everyone aside and saying, "Get out of the way, it is because of you that I cannot see Nibbāna." It happened because they became skillful in observing their thoughts. That is all that is needed.

Today I am not asking you for anything else. Guard your mind. Protect your mind. Be mindful of the mind. Do not allow yourself to be subjugated by a single arising thought — subjugate each one of them. For this, use as many skillful means as required. However, maintain the understanding of why you are doing this. What is the harm in being subjugated by thoughts? Reflect deeply on this; you must have this knowledge.

Every action must be grounded in reason. If you submit to thoughts, a flaw will arise — becoming (*bhava*). If this happens, there will be consequences all the way to aging and death. You must clearly see this cause-and-effect relationship. But if you do not yield to thoughts and instead restrain them, there will be a benefit: becoming will cease. One logically follows from the other; act based on this. Be sure to try practicing like this for at least a week or two.

Today in your mind there exists an entire realm where you continue to mentally quarrel and argue with those you call mother, father, daughter, son, brother. All of this is created by your defilements (*kilesa*). If Nibbāna is discerned, the suffering of this existence (*bhava-dukkha*) will disappear this very day. You will be liberated from the very suffering that you experience in this world of sensual desires (*kāma-bhava*). This is precisely Nibbāna with remainder (*sopādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu*), leading subsequently to Nibbāna without remainder.

Through the vision of Nibbāna, even while the remainder of the aggregates (*khandha*) is present, liberation from becoming occurs, liberation from the world, liberation from aging and death, as well as from the anxieties and hardships associated with children and grandchildren.

And this liberation occurs without any violent coercion. Suppose you have a child. You experience a deep attachment and love for them — this is natural, such is human nature. Think about it: is it really possible to see Nibbāna if you forcefully tear the child away from yourself, saying, "You are not my child, attachment to you is the only obstacle to my liberation," and drive them out? No, it is impossible.

If you force the child to leave, or if you yourself leave them for the forest, saying, "I do not need any of this, it is precisely because of children that I cannot liberate myself from saṃsāra, I must leave" — look for yourself, won't you feel pain because of this attachment? Won't suffering and torment come to you? They certainly will.

But now for half an hour you do not yield to your thoughts. When you regard each thought arising in your mind as impermanent (*anicca*), does sorrow from separation from your child arise? Do you know that a child can be separated from oneself without any pain? This is how it happens. If he has not yet seen Nibbāna, you preserve for him the possibility of being with his father. At the same time you separate yourself from the child, but not in the ordinary sense of the word. You preserve for him the possibility of being with his father, yet you yourself are freed from the child, because you are freed from the fetter called "child." And all of this — merely through seeing the impermanence (*anicca*) of this thought. Without any effort.

This gives you the following understanding: the child still perceives you as a father — just as you used to perceive the world as

real while under the influence of defilements (*kilesa*). You know that you can cause him pain by saying or doing something. Therefore, you help the child out of pure compassion (*karuṇā*), not wishing him suffering, and you say: "What is it, son, what do you need?"

However, such a person will not waver in the slightest, even on the day when liberation from this object [of clinging] arrives [when it is time to part with it]. Such a person gains a vision in which there is no place for their own suffering, and, relying on it, lives for the sake of helping a suffering world. They live for the benefit of the world, abiding with a mind that experiences no suffering.

Yet they arrived at the state where there is no suffering without causing pain either to others or to themselves. This too must be remembered. They attained Nibbāna not by harshly rejecting everything to which they had previously been so attached — property, houses, children and loved ones — while those people protested, cried out, and wept.

All they did was look with wisdom at a simple thought that had arisen in their mind. But they know well the workings of this sphere. This must be well remembered.

Maintaining mindfulness on an ordinary thought that has arisen in your mind is extremely important. Look, how many thoughts come to you during the half hour that you sit like this? When you direct mindfulness toward a thought, or when you see it as impermanent, this process has two sides. This, too, must be remembered very well.

The first of them is the external, frontal side of every image arising in memory. What is this side? It is the Truth, which can be expressed like this: any image consists of the four great primary elements (*cattāro mahā-bhūtā*) and derived matter (*upādāya-rūpa*). This truth helps you not to perceive the image as something real. In other

words, it is precisely due to the knowledge that any form is merely the four great elements that you resist this thought, approaching the image from the position of understanding its elemental nature.

On the other[, internal] side, by seeing the true nature of the image, you do not allow it to become an object of clinging (*upādāna*). That is, within a single given vision of the impermanence of a thought, you completely recognize the aggregates (*khandha*). In doing so, arising (*samudaya*) is eradicated. Remember: this is precisely what we were talking about: when this happens, cessation (*nirodha*) is established ever more strongly through direct experience.

When the child was recalled — what did you ordinarily do with this before? There was no other sphere for you. There was no other truth. This is called "the time without a Buddha" (*abuddhuppāda-kāla*). This means that when the child was recalled, you had only that sphere in which you thought, spoke, and acted, perceiving him as a child. Only within this plane of clinging to the five aggregates did you think, speak, and act. Because of this, the mind did not go beyond the standpoint of "the child exists." Each time seeing occurred, the very idea of the child's existence only reinforced the perception of a being or a person. In this way the possibility of realizing Nibbāna was lost.

In such a world you have been given the "land (*khetta*<sup>2</sup>) of the Father" (the teaching of the Buddha): however many forms (*rūpa*) there may be, any one of them is nothing but the four great elements. Now a new foundation, a new ground (*bhūmi*<sup>3</sup>), opens up for you. Now you strike at Māra while standing on this ground. That is, when a thought of the child arises, you already know both sides of the coin. You have been taught: if you do not remember the "land of the Father" (of the Buddha), if you do not stand upon it and if you do not repel this mental image (*nimitta*), you will become attached to

it, begin to think, speak, and act on the basis of it, build up existence, becoming (*bhava*), and move further away from Nibbāna. Therefore, when the child is recalled [, you immediately look]: "Although I thought 'child,' the form itself there is nothing but the four great elements, is it not?"

When you cross over to that side — to the "land of the Father" — and dwell there, recalling this Truth, what happens next? The next thing that happens through such reflection is: you do not allow yourself to think, speak, and act on the basis of perceiving this image as reality. "No, although 'child' was recalled — here there are only the four great elements" — what does this thought mean? It means that on your own side you cut off the very way in which thoughts proliferate to the level where defilements arise, where attraction and aversion are born. You close this door. In this case you have the wisdom, the understanding of why you are doing this: if this is done, if clinging (*upādāna*) is removed, then becoming (*bhava*) will cease as well. There is no other way to sever and remove this sense of the existence [of things] and the presence [of beings].

So, there are these two sides when you sit for half an hour and during this time subjugate every arising thought. There are also two sides when Māra wins. How exactly does Māra win? He wins when every arising thought — every thought that has arisen during this half hour — becomes reality for you. The child was remembered as real, the wife was remembered as real, something from work was remembered as real. If this has happened, it means, firstly, that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is absent: upfront stands the ignorance of the truth about the aggregates. And secondly, clinging (*upādāna*) is present. In such a case, suffering is not fully comprehended, and the cause of suffering (*samudaya*) is not eradicated but, on the contrary,

proliferates. The result of this is becoming (*bhava*), and because of it, Nibbāna is not seen.

If a person offers such resistance to every thought that arises in them, it means they are practicing *satipaṭṭhāna*: mindfulness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), or mindfulness of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), or mindfulness of mind states (*cittānupassanā*), or mindfulness of phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*).

With such awareness, clinging (*upādāna*) does not arise. The practitioner understands that during these thirty minutes he has recognized two territories, two possible states. "Having sat down to meditate for thirty minutes, will I during this time submit to each arising thought, or will I myself subjugate each arising thought?" — this is something a person clearly knows about themselves.

If you remain subjugated by every arising thought, this is precisely clinging (*upādāna*). If this happens, then becoming (*bhava*) arises. Then it is not seen that what has arisen ceases. Nibbāna is not seen.

If Nibbāna is not seen, then kamma will inevitably accumulate.

If kamma accumulates, then future aging and death are inevitable. If during this half an hour you yielded to thoughts, then you know it yourself: it ended with you receiving the sufferings of saṃsāra.

If during these thirty minutes you master each arising thought, you will know: "I did not allow thoughts to become objects of clinging. During these thirty minutes I skillfully struck at Māra." Because clinging did not arise, you will know: becoming (*bhava*) is being cut off little by little, becoming is diminishing.

If becoming (*bhava*) diminishes, your mind on its own brings your inner vision to see: everything that has arisen ceases. To see

Nibbāna, nothing more is needed. It is enough for you merely to see and remember that the arising thought is *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*.

It is said that "thought is impermanent," "thought is not 'I'," "there is no *attā* in thought," "thought is empty." But it is not through words that Nibbāna can be seen, remember this well. This is merely a skillful method. What is it for?

So that, by looking in this way, you realize this Truth for yourself. So that you make it your own Truth, verify it for yourself. After this you will no longer allow yourself to think, speak, and act on the basis of thoughts accompanied by defilements. Why will you not allow yourself this? There must be some benefit in everything, must there not? One must understand the meaning of what one is doing.

Well, why live like this, not taking every thought as reality? If one acts in this way, becoming is cut off. And why eradicate becoming? Because then it becomes visible: everything that has arisen ceases. Why see that what has arisen ceases? Why strive to discern Nibbāna? So that kammic signs (*kamma-nimitta*) leading to a new existence are not formed. Why stop the formation of kamma? Because then there will be no new rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi*). Why stop rebirth-linking consciousness? Because then the sufferings of saṃsāra will cease. It is precisely in this answer — in the sufferings of saṃsāra — that the reason lies for which the practitioner strives to see Nibbāna. All these links are connected with one another.

Everything must be grounded in reason. To the question of why one should observe impermanence, an answer is necessary. Every time one fails to see impermanence, the thought becomes reality.

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<sup>1</sup> The literal translation of the word "Nibbāna" is extinguishing, as it is the "fading out" of the fire of passions (attachment, ill will, and delusion). In Pali

and Sinhalese texts, the state of saṃsāra (suffering) is often compared to burning and heat. Anger, attachment, and ignorance are like a fire that burns the mind. They also speak of the heat of kāma (*kāma-dāha*). The lives of arahants have cooled down because for them this heat has completely extinguished without remainder. See "[On the Translation of the Word 'Nibbāna'](#)" by Bhikkhu Russiave Dhammanissita.

In colloquial Sinhalese speech, there is a similar expression: when people in Sri Lanka say of a person that their heart or mind has cooled down, they mean that they have found deep peace, having rid themselves of anxiety and haste.

## **2 khetta**

1: nt. field; plot of land

2: nt. place; location; grounds; lit. field

3: nt. field of kamma; plane of existence

4: nt. domain; sphere; range; lit. field

## **3 bhūmi**

1: fem. earth; ground

2: fem. land; region; area; realm

3: fem. grounds; basis; foundation

4: fem. plane; level; stage; sphere

## CONCLUSION

**T**o put it briefly, from this day forth you, virtuous ones, have two domains, two spheres.

When you withdraw and sink into reflection, you may think of yourself: "Am I really so weak? Every single thought masters me. This is how Māra crushes me!" — all of this you, virtuous ones, can see. It may be that these thoughts become reality, truth for you — and you will enter into dialogue with them, react to them.

But you can also see something else, virtuous listeners: how little by little you develop the ability to establish yourself at that level where you are no longer drawn to thinking, speech, and action under the influence of defilements.

Therefore, I want to remind you: do not go in search of Nibbāna somewhere outside. The ability to discern Nibbāna is located only within yourselves, virtuous listeners. Nibbāna is hidden because of the delusion [of searching for it somewhere in the external world]. And this mistake must be corrected precisely within.

I have not given you many areas for practice. Having established yourself in the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, understanding that any form (*rūpa*) is *anattā*, you will see: everything that is perceived as *attā*, as permanent, as happiness, arises along with the defilements of the

mind (*kilesa*) from a single source called mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*). You should remain solely at this gateway.

However, keep your "bow and arrows" with you. This means that the more knowledge you have about form (*rūpa*), the causes of the arising of form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and mental factors (*cetasika*), the easier it will be for you to subdue the arising thoughts.

Keep with you that knowledge which allows you to see everything as *anicca*, as *dukkha*, as *anattā*, as *asubha* — the unattractive.

So, this is precisely what I had to explain to you. If you do this, you will surely begin to recognize your thoughts [as thoughts] in a short time. As soon as you reach the level where you can [easily] recognize your thoughts, you will already be halfway liberated from becoming (*bhava*).

Only now have we come to what is called the true direct path of the Dhamma. This means that everything I have spoken about today has never changed. It is precisely because it is true that we have now arrived at this point.

Verify in practice how well-grounded this is. There are no shorter paths. Thus, for the complete realization of Nibbāna you need only to recognize the three characteristics in each individual thought: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*.

Correct your weaknesses. If you cannot see a thought precisely as a thought and discern its *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*, it means that either morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), sense restraint, or moderation in eating is lacking. Correct these shortcomings. And as you correct them, know that you are doing it all for one single purpose — to lessen the burden of thoughts.

What holds us back is not a connection with any person, with any individual. The flaw that needs to be corrected lies in the very

feeling as if a thought is a person, an individual, a being. In reality, there is no person, no individual, no being. And this is the experience gained through the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. The entire task consists in lessening the burden of thoughts that arise because of the feeling: "But the child really exists!"

The moment the vision of the cessation of all that has arisen arrives, these adventitious defilements return to where they came from. The radiant mind manifests once again. And within that mind, together with that mind, you are not. And that mind is not bound to you.

On that day, there will be neither sense bases belonging to you, nor you belonging to the sense bases. This is precisely the end of suffering.

All of this is found right here. Listen to this carefully in tranquility, in solitude (*viveka*). If someone deeply understands this principle, they will be able to go into the forest alone and completely destroy their mental influxes (*āsaṅga*). Then even a teacher will no longer be needed.

May you all be protected by the Triple Gem!

*"Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: 'In the seen, there shall be just the seen; in the heard, just the heard; in the sensed, just the sensed; in the cognized, just the cognized.' When, Bāhiya, for you in the seen there is just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the sensed just the sensed, in the cognized just the cognized, then you will not exist 'with that.'*

*And when you do not exist 'with that,' then you will not exist 'in that.' When, Bāhiya, you do not exist 'in that,' then you will exist neither here nor there nor in between the two. This is precisely the end of suffering." The moment Bāhiya heard this brief teaching*

*of the Blessed One, his mind was instantly liberated from all defilements through non-clinging.*

— BĀHIYA SUTTA: BĀHIYA, UDĀNA 1.10