

Paticca-samuppāda Sutta

(Samyutta Nikāya, Nidānavagga)



**Venerable Uda Eriyagama
Dhammajiva Maha Thero**

Meditation Retreat held at
Nissaranavanaya - Meethirigala



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This is a compilation of English translations of the
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Acknowledgements and Dedication

The translator is indebted to Renuka and to all those responsible for organizing this retreat at Nissaranavanaya Meethirigala in January 2012, to those responsible for audio recording and audio editing the Dhamma talks and discussions, to Devika and Chandana for their valuable comments and suggestions towards finalizing the text, and the sponsors of this publication.

This Dhamma dana is an offering made to the Sangha of Nissaranavanaya and it is dedicated to the memory of:

Mr and Mrs G C T A de Silva and Mrs Sushila Fonseka

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Throughout the text *Pāli* terms were reotained wherever it was felt that the accuracy of the meaning of the teachings may have been compromised had they not. The Translator liberally used the ***Buddhist Dictionary*** by Venerable Nyānātiloka and ***A Pali-English Glossary of Buddhist Technical Terms*** (Venerable Nānamoli and Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi) to give meaning to the content and to add richness to the discourses.

Translator's Foreword

The Dhamma Talks in this book were given at a nine-day meditation retreat held at Nissaranavanaya, Meethirigala in January 2012. The Meditation Master is Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva MahaThero and the Dhamma Talks were based on the ***Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta*** from the ***Samyutta Nikāya*** and were in Sinhala.

The Buddha's teaching on '*Dependant Arising*' is considered as deep and profound, and one which gives radical and penetrative insight into the Path to *nibbāna*. On each day of the retreat every sequential link described in the doctrine of dependant arising was dealt with, with great clarity. While extracting and expounding the deep Dhamma embedded within this Sutta, the Meditation Master repeatedly brings the yogis' attention to their individual practice. The manner in which he exposes the opportunity to skillfully apply these powerful Dhamma teachings to one's own meditation and the constant message, that these experiences can be realized by any human mind, is unique. The complete novice and new comer to a meditation retreat at Nissaranavanaya as well as a seasoned practitioner could equally relate to these memorable teachings.

As a teacher Venerable Dhammajiva inspires and energizes yogis with his depth and breadth of knowledge of the Dhamma. His skill of imparting complex teachings of the Buddha to a group of lay meditators is fascinating. The experience gained from being a *bhikkhu* of over twenty years seniority, having taught monks as well as laity for over fifteen years both locally as well as globally, is reflected in his discourses and Dhamma discussions, as well as during interviews with practitioners from all walks of life. His sharp and incisive mind, which delves into the deepest and

profoundest Dhamma in every *sutta* he uses for retreat teaching are laced with anecdotes and an abundance of wit and humour. These are what make him a much sought after meditation teacher today.

During his entire teaching career Venerable Dhammajiva has always used the Buddha's discourses as the base for teaching meditation practice to both monastics and the laity alike. Deep *suttas* from the *tripitaka* are treated by this Master with extraordinary clarity and deep sensitivity. Venerable Dhammajiva is a rare and compassionate *kalyānamitta* we meet in *samsāra*, who has dedicated his life towards sharing the teachings of the Buddha whilst reiterating the potential that each one of us has, in attaining *nibbana in this life itself*.

Editor's Preface

The *Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta* is an instance where one of the fundamental and profound principles of Buddhist Philosophy *Hetu-Phala dhamma* (Law of Cause and Effect) is explained in detail. *Hetu-Phala dhamma* is dealt with briefly in the *ariya-sacca* (the Four Noble Truths). The most detailed exposition of the *Hetu-Phala dhamma* is given in the *Patthāna Prakaranaya* of the *Abhidhamma pitaka*.

Venerable Dhammajiva explains this important Sutta displaying his in-depth knowledge of the dhamma. Relating each Sutta to meditation practice is his unique ability to make the Dhamma which was preached 2600 years ago come alive brilliantly and vibrantly to the present.

We are indeed grateful to Venerable Dhammajiva for his untiring commitment to teach the dhamma and his guidance in the meditation practice; encouraging and inspiring the *siwwanak pirisa* (four-fold assembly - Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni/Upasake/Upasika) to strive diligently on the path to reach liberation in this life itself.

I am deeply honoured to be a part of this meritorious deed of editing the translations into English the *Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta*, which will enable this invaluable wisdom being made available to a greater audience.

May All Beings be Happy.

Devika Jayawardena

Dhamma Talk 1

Evam me sutam ekam samayam

Bhagavā Sāvattṭhiyam viharati Jetavane, Anāthapindikassa ārāme

Atako bhagavā bhikkhu amantesi bhikkhavoti

Bhadhanteti te bhikkhu bhagavato

Paccassosum bhagavā etadavoca

Paṭṭicasamuppādam vo bhikkhave desissami

Tansunata sadukam manasikarota

Bhāsissatamiti tī

This Retreat will be based on the deep and profound doctrine taught by the Buddha, the *Paṭṭicasamuppāda* and the Dhamma Talks will be based on the *Paṭṭicasamuppāda Sutta* (*Samyutta Nikāya, Nidānavagga*). The theme of today's talk refers to the Buddha's words, when on his own accord the Buddha tells the *bhikkhus* that he will explain the *Paṭṭicasamuppāda* and he invites them to listen and contemplate on this important doctrine. This was a classic method used by the Buddha when teaching *bhikkhus* : he first stated the topic/tile of the discourse (*uddesa*), then he gave an exposition on the topic (*niddesa*) and thereafter he explained the doctrine contained in the discourse (*patinid-desā*).

I intend to present the dhamma contained in this *Sutta* in a manner that would help one's own meditation practice. It is important to understand this and to practically relate the *Paṭṭicasamuppāda* to meditation practise and to not confine it to theoretical knowledge only. Therefore I suggest that these teachings may not suit the complete begin-

ner or novice in meditation, but that they may benefit those with experience in the practise of meditation. I also wish to connect the teachings from this *Sutta* to the *Seven Insight Knowledges*.

The *Visuddhimagga*, the most famous treatise on meditation written by Acharya Buddhaghosa, is based on the seven methods of purification during meditation practice – *satta visuddhi*. Hence the term *Visuddhimagga*. However, according to the Buddha's teachings, the purification method is not the only method recommended and others include : *ariya-wamsa patipada*, *duwataka patipada*, *nālaka patipada*, *ratavinīta patipada*. The *Visuddhimagga* is based on the *ratavinīta patipada*.

The *Ratavinītha Sutta* (MN), describes a discussion that takes place between Venerables Sāriputta and Puṇṇa Mantāniputta. The latter was a senior monk who was well-versed in the Dhamma and was reputed to be an excellent teacher.

The Elder, Venerable Sāriputta was considered the *Marshal of the Dhamma* and he questions how a novice can develop and cultivate *sīla*, *samādhī*, *paññā*.

During this discussion the following questions are raised:

Venerable Sāriputta : Are you observing *brahmacariya* for the sake of *sīla-visuddhi* (purification of morality)?

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta : No

Venerable Sāriputta : Then is it for the sake of *citta-visuddhi* (purification of the mind)?

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta: No

Venerable Sāriputta : Then is it for the sake of *ditṭhi-visuddhi* (purification of view)?

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta : No

Venerable Sāriputta : Then is it for the sake of *kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi* (purification by overcoming doubt)?

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta : No

The conversation thus goes on and eventually Venerable Sāriputta asks : If it is not for any of those reasons, for what reason are you observing a the holy/celebrate (*brahmacariya*) life style?

Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta says that he observes *sīla-visuddhi* for the sake of reaching *citta-visuddhi* ,and then by observing *citta-visuddhi* he would reach the state of *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*. Therefore, it is through such a stage-by-stage process that he would reach *nibbāna* and not with simply one purification. Each purification helps in achieving the next. In this context *citta-visuddhi* is the state of concentration (*samādhī*) and the *jhānas* one would reach during *samatha* practice. *Diṭṭhi-visuddhi*, although a very important stage in purification where one's view of the entity called 'self' is made clear, is only a stepping-stone to reach *kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi* – where the yogi matures and reaches a stage where doubt is lost, and the yogi understands conditionality (i.e. the Dhamma of cause and effect). But this too is an aid to reach the next stage, *maggāmagga-ñānadassana-visuddhi* – a purification that would overcome all doubt about what the Path 'is' and what the Path is 'not', what is 'good' and what is 'bad', what is meant by 'Dhamma' and what is not.

This is a crucial hurdle to cross, because it is at this stage that the yogi's mind which was previously hesitant and unclear, becomes clear and focused. It is only at this stage that the yogi knows with certainty what he should do (or not

do) and how he should forge ahead with the practice. This is the fifth purification, and the stage at which the yogi will proceed on the Path irrespective of what may happen with firm resolve (*adhimokkha*) and with no doubts whatsoever. He then enters the stage of *paṭipadāññānadassana-visuddhi* – i.e. the purification by knowledge and vision of the path-progress. The yogi will then master this knowledge and consolidate it, and use it to enter the Path. Such a yogi will have reached the *ñānadassana-visuddhi* – the knowledge and purification that would enable the yogi to reach for the fruits of *nibbāna*.

This is how the seven purifications are described, each one leading to the next and the next, and so on.

The Buddha emphasized that the path of purification is a gradual one and that each stage is equally important to reach the next one.

The importance of mastering *sīla-visuddhi* in order to reach the next stage of *citta-visuddhi* cannot be overstressed. Yet, if we use *sīla* to judge or measure others and if we consider ourselves ‘high’ and others ‘low’ in this context it defeats the purpose and we will never be able to eradicate our defilements. In the *Sappurisa Sutta* (MN) the Buddha describes this pitfall that many mediators fall into, and he says that the more judgmental we are the less progress we will make in our meditation. We need to first develop our own human qualities and not try to judge or correct others. We have no authority to do so and we can rest assured that our *vipassanā* practice will never progress. This is not due to any deficiency of our *sīla* but due to the conceit and arrogance that we have about our own *sīla*. Buddha specifically advises that *sīla* is practiced to ‘still’ our minds to make it less discursive, and thereafter to reach *citta-visuddhi*. We should understand this in order to purify our minds.

While understanding this the Buddha cautions us about strengthening and developing our own *sīla*, so that we always endeavor to convert it to an *adhi sīla*, i.e. from *panca sīla* to *ājīva atthamaka sīla*, from there to observing eight precepts, ten precepts and so on. If we fail to realize the importance of this teaching it will be difficult to understand profound Dhammas like those described in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. As meditators we need to understand that *sīla* will not only help us to ‘still’ our minds, but that it will also protect us from the four great ‘Fears’ -:

1. Fear due to old age, illness and death - *atthānuvāda baya*
2. Fear about what others will say – *parānuvāda baya*
3. Fear about punishments by the authorities – *danda baya*
4. Fear of being born in hell realms - *duggathi baya*

Today most people distract themselves to avoid facing these fears by using the TV, radio, newspapers and other forms of entertainment. Therefore when a person diligently observes *sīla* it is a tremendous relief because they know that they are morally ‘pure’ and they know they won’t have to face these fears. The spectrum and range of *sīla* one can observe is wide – from *panca sīla* as a lay person, to the extreme *dhutanga sīla* of a monk. The Buddha advises us to always attempt to observe a higher *sīla* to what we traditionally observe, i.e. to attempt to reach a higher level of purity. *Citta-visuddhi* will not be achievable unless this is practiced. But this should not be done due to any compulsion or due to any threats you may face, or due to any other agenda. It should purely be for the respect one has for the *sāsana* and the aim of reaching the ultimate goal of *nibbāna* through this moral training.

The Buddha repeatedly cautions us that if we criticize others for deficiencies in their *sīla*, it would be a set-back for the criticizer's own practice. In fact, if a *bhikkhu* were to create disturbances in the mind of another *bhikkhu* with such criticism about the latter's *sīla*, the former will need some form of punishment. Our mind is like an open wound, constantly exposed to defilements such as *māna* and *dōsa* – measuring others and criticizing them. We have only one salvation and that is the protection from *sīla visuddhi*. With that if we are able to reach *citta-visuddhi* and then we will be able to examine our own mind.

This is a critical situation because those without *sīla visuddhi* find it difficult to do this. The four fears loom in front of them when they sit down in seclusion to meditate and when they shut their eyes. They have enormous doubts and fears. The transition from *sīla sikkhā* to *samādhī sikkhā* is a tremendous challenge to many people. Using sati – mindfulness on one object such as the in/out-breath, we attempt to reach one-pointedness of the mind (*citta ekaggathā*), i.e. to reach *samatha samādhī*, *upacāra samādhī* or *arpanā samādhī*. Admittedly, this is quite a struggle. But we should realize this situation is achievable only by humans. Animals and those in the hell realms can never reach this stage and nor can the inhabitants of the celestial realms at most times. Such is the purity of this stage – *citta-visuddhi*, achievable only by those established in the *sīla*.

The biggest obstacle to reach this stage is the five hindrances – *panca nīvarana*. To reach *citta-visuddhi* the meditator would have removed the *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa*. But before that, through *sīla-visuddhi* they would have removed the *vīthikama kilesa*. *Vīthikama kilesa* are overt societal transgressions, whereas *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa* are hidden defilements that taunt us when we sit to meditate. We can pre-

tend to be very pious and holy, and yet have these hidden defilements beneath. In fact 'Religion' teaches us how to suppress our inner greed, hate, jealousies, doubt etc and how to appear 'cultured' and 'civilized' as members of society. Whereas the Dhamma teaches us how to face these common defilements and to remove them effectively. This is one instance where Dhamma defers from Religion.

It is only a very small percentage of 'religious' people who will know the Dhamma and through that know that they still have hidden defilements like *kāmacanda* –greed/covetousness or *patigha* – ill will, or *thīna-middha* –sloth and torpor or *uddhacca-kukkucca* – restlessness and remorse, , or *vicikiccha* – sceptical doubt which they will have to face and remove someday. Therefore we must learn that all these mental states have occurred through the law of 'cause and effect' and that these are all subject to dependant origination -*Paṭiccasamuppāda* . Unless we understand this thoroughly we will not be able to transcend our transgressional defilements or *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa*. We may be successful in suppressing these, as it is done during *samatha* practise, but we will never be successful in uprooting these hindrances. I would like to refer to the simile of the surgeon preparing the patient for surgery – the patient is treated with anti-septics and then taken into a sanitized environment like the operating theatre and only then he will be operated. This is like when observing *sīla* he is subject to antisepsis within a sanitized environment. When the patient is thus sanitized and prepared thoroughly (*sīla visuddhi*), he is ready to face the hindrances and suppress them. Anaesthesia can be equated to suppressing the hindrances prior to 'operating' on the deeper defilements. But the hindrances need not be completely suppressed always, i.e. General Anesthesia is not needed always and a local anaesthetic introduced to a

specific area may be adequate. Nevertheless the hindrances have to be suppressed at least to a certain degree, and the mind needs to be sufficiently stilled in order to allow the defilements that reside deep down and within the crevices of the mind, to surface.

During the *Bodhisattva* period of the present Buddha there had been many ascetics and hermits who successfully practiced *samatha* meditation by suppressing the hindrances. They lived in seclusion in remote forests and monasteries in India, and attained heights of meditation with special knowledges – *abhiññā*. In fact, while the Gautama *Bodhisattva* was practicing the ten perfections (*dasa pāramita*) these hermits and rishis were developing and perfecting their special attainments through concentration meditation. Yet, none of them were able reach *nibbāna*. In his final birth, the *Bodhisattva* – Prince Siddhartha – attained purification of the mind - *citta-visuddhi* on the day of the King's ploughing festival, when he attained deep states of concentration while meditating under the rose apple tree.

But the knowledge that the attainment of *citta-visuddhi* can be used for the purpose of attaining *diṭṭhi-visuddhi* occurred to the *bodhisattva* only much later and that was quite by chance. The ancient Indian ascetics practiced deep states of concentration based on their Hindu beliefs that these exalted mind-states led to divine states that were 'brahma' in origin and therefore close to the creator-god. Their belief was that these states would lead to *vimoksha* - liberation. The Buddha, after his enlightenment demonstrated that by perfecting *sīla* (*sīla-visuddhi*) and then reaching deep states of *samādhī* (*citta-visuddhi*) one can systematically reach *diṭṭhi-visuddhi* – thus purifying the 'view' and dispelling the belief of a *atta* /soul, which characterized the meditation practices that existed before the *Bodhistava's* enlighten-

ment.

Reaching *vipassanā* insights is an outcome of these purification practices. The first Insight Knowledge (*nāma-rūpa paricceda ñāṇa*) allows us to understand the meaning of *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*. This brings me to the essence of today's Dhamma Talk – i.e. understanding how our individual meditation practice (i.e. meditation on the in/out-breath or rise and fall of the abdomen or right/left foot during walking) enables us to transcend *citta visuddhi* and reach *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*. In our practise we don't stop at *citta-visuddhi* but we go further. Indeed, in the *Ratavinītha Sutta*, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta suggests that *citta-visuddhi* is practiced for the purpose of reaching *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*. Understanding this is vital to be able to understand the *Paṭicca samuppāda*.

During meditation (e.g. *ānāpānasati*), after beginning with the characteristic present moment awareness – ‘*Now I am Here*’ – after a while our mind settles down and we are able to have minimal thoughts and disturbances, and the meditation proceeds smoothly. Supposing we are able stay in the present-moment for many thought-moments devoid of disturbances we then enjoy a very pure period where our *sīla visuddhi* and *citta-visuddhi* are complete, and during such a period it is almost as if we are experiencing a momentary *nibbāna*. Our challenge at such a time is to preserve that moment for as long as we possibly can. But if we entertain any doubts during that stage (doubts such as – ‘am I doing the correct thing? Is this the correct Path?’) then we would be laying out powerful obstacles for the emergence of *diṭṭhi visuddhi* (purification of view) and *kankhāvitarāṇa-visuddhi* (purification by overcoming doubt). Instead, if the yogi feels overjoyed and content that the mind has turned inwards and that they know that they are in perfect mindfulness and

in the present-moment, that is all that is needed. If the yogi can maintain this situation for a while during *ānāpānasati* or during mindfulness of the rise/fall of abdomen, then the chances for reaching the first *vipassanā* insight are high.

At that point the yogi will be able to know that the in-breath is indeed the in-breath, and not the out-breath and vice-versa. This experience of the breath (in and out) – *rūpa dhamma* - and the knowing of that very experience – *nāma dhamma* - is described as the *nāma-rūpa paricceda ñāna* or the first *Vipassanā* Insight. This insight enables us to know that the event of the in/out breathing (or the rise and fall of the abdomen) is not one compact unit, but that it comprises two – i.e, materiality (*rūpa dhamma* – or *pathavi, āpō, thejō, vāyō* making contact with the skin) and the discrete ‘knowing’ of it (*nāma dhamma*). When the yogi understands this experientially, they have reached a significant mile stone. After a lot of practice, if the yogi can repeatedly experience this phenomenon, that each activity we engage in comprises a material component and a mental component of the mind that ‘knows’ it, then they would be competently challenging the perpetual ‘self-view’.

The identification of this dual nature of phenomena is one thing, but the ability to repeatedly experience it is another. The former is referred to as *āsevnā prathya* (knowledge of association) and the latter is called *bhāvitha manasa* – a mind that can repeatedly contemplate the ‘knowing’. When this is repeated many times and the yogi has mastered it fully, when engaged in walking meditation as well, each time the sole of the foot touches the ground the yogi will note the contact between the skin and the ground, and also the mind that noted it, as two separate events. Similarly they will note that at the point of contact the ground is hot and that the foot is cold (or coarse/smooth or wet/dry) and each

time they will note the mind that noted these differences. Previously the yogi would have been oblivious to these experiences.

This same experience at the feet/ground or breath/nostril can be applied to each sense-door , i.e. sound waves making contact with the ear drum (*rūpa dhamma*) and then hearing takes place; a colourful object making contact with the eye and seeing takes place. When we note this sensory transaction (hearing or seeing) as it occurs with our minds (*nāma dhamma*), then we have noted *nāma* and *rūpa* separately. The same can be applied to the nose/smelling, tongue/tasting, skin/touching, mind/thinking all the time. During every given moment, there is a sense-object (*rūpa*) meeting a sense-door (*rūpa*) and the resultant event of seeing/hearing/smelling etc occur all the time, but usually these events go unnoticed. But if, with repeated practice we maintain the momentum of knowing (*nāma*) this transaction and noting *nāma-rūpa* separately throughout the day, we will successfully deal repeated blows to our self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) thus gradually hindering its potency. The ability to see the *rūpa* and *nāma* as two separate entities means that the yogi's *atta diṭṭhi* is systematically getting destroyed. Hence the reluctance of the yogi to continue this noting experience. This is why doubt sets in as to whether they are doing the correct thing or not. The yogi will feel distinctly uncomfortable and nauseous, and would much rather avoid doing it.

Realizing the *nāma-rūpa paricceda ñāna* is to know that every transaction is made of at least two components and that the *jīva ātta diṭṭhi* is not one solid or compact unit as we previously believed. We can apply this understanding to sitting meditation, to walking meditation and to every activity in our daily lives. A popular teaching in Zen Buddhism is to try and hear the sound of a clap using one hand. This

would not be possible because without two hands there would be no clap and therefore no sound. When the yogi experientially understands this they will not be attached or cling to a particular sensory input. If when an object hits the eye, if we mindfully note that transaction as it occurs as ‘seeing’ then we will not cling to it and our tendency to indulge in that object will not arise. Similarly when eating, if we note every distinct flavor as ‘sweet’, bitter’, ‘sour’ etc, then we will be completely aware of the activity of eating and also we will not greedily overeat. In this manner, with steadfast mindfulness if we note the *nāma-rūpa* in each sensory activity, such a yogi will have less obstacles to their meditation.

If a yogi has mastered this knowledge successfully, they would be able meditate with ease under any circumstance and not be distracted by always wanting deep states of concentration. They would know how to use the concentration they develop (*citta-visuddhi*) towards achieving *ditthi vi-suddhi* - i.e. learning to note *nāma-rūpa* in each sensory transaction even in the midst of noise and other activity. During *ānāpānasati* the yogi will ‘know’ when the mind is elsewhere and they will ‘know’ each sound and each pain as they occur, but will revert their attention back to the breath and not be disturbed. Thus the yogi will gain experience and maturity in this exercise, and will gradually incorporate into the daily living. Such a yogi is a student of *vipassanā* practise.

When contact (*phassa*) occurs with each sensory organ (*salāyatana*), sensations (*vedanā*) will be experienced.

Salāyatana paccaya phasso, phassa paccaya vedanā...this is how it is mentioned in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.

In the case of *ānāpānasati*, the skin surface (*kāya prasāda*)

and draft of air (*phottabba rūpa*) have to come into contact with each other for us to ‘know’ the in or out-breath. But when this transaction occurs if our mind is wandering elsewhere we will not ‘know’ this event. Or if we are engaged with some sounds or sights at that moment, we will fail to ‘know’ this. If we are successful in ‘knowing’ each in and out-breath as we take it, then, we have achieved a lot. We must realize that until the point when a sensory impingement makes contact with the sense organ (until the moment before *phassa* occurs), our minds are pure and not defiled. It is only when contact is made and if we are unaware of this transaction, sensations (*vedanā*) arise, and with that *tanhā* (craving), *upādāna* (clinging) and so on. This is how the impurities and defilements are generated. Whereas, if with subtle and sharp mindfulness we note the sensory transaction as it occurs, like noting each breath as it manifests, then there would be no time for any defilements like greed, conceit and self-view (*tanhā, māna, diṭṭhi*) to be established. This keeps our mind pure. Some teachers describe this phenomena as ‘thin slicing of time’. It usually takes about four/five thought-moments (*cittakkhana*) to pass after making the initial contact, and for our minds to register every sense transaction. This is due to the coarseness of our minds. Whereas if we are able to ‘slice the time’ thinly then we may grasp this clearly.

Appamāda means ‘knowing’ the transaction before those four/five thought-moments, i.e. knowing the transaction as it occurs. During *ānāpānasati*, it means ‘knowing’ each in or out-breath as and when it occurs without any delay at all. During walking meditation it means ‘knowing’ the contact the right/left foot makes with the ground as it occurs. The Buddha advised us to note the beginning of each breath – the very start of the in-breath before it overtly manifests

as a full-blown swelling within the nasal cavity. If the yogi succeeds in noting each successive breath repeatedly, at its very onset, then *yoniso-manasikāra* or radical/wise attention has been established, and the yogi has realized the *Paccaya pariggaha-ñāna* or *Dhammaṭṭi-ñāna* - the second *vipassanā* knowledge. When a yogi reaches this stage of understanding then they would have gained the spiritual maturity needed to understand experientially, the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. Until that point it would simply be a mere theoretical understanding of this deep Dhamma.

The Buddha said that seeing every event (e.g. in/out breath, each step during walking) exactly at the very beginning and until the very end, will help us to eventually see things as they really are. What we experience with our coarse and unenlightened minds are events or different sensory transactions after they have occurred, i.e. after they have undergone some transformation and after they have been 'made up' or 'disguised'. And we always believe that these 'dramas' and 'actors' are real. This is because we never pause with mindfulness and wisdom to see the actual nature of any event.

The Buddha refers to this dhamma phenomenon when he exclaimed the *Udāna* (inspired utterance) on the night of his Enlightenment. He said that he had traveled in *samsāra* for aeons believing what he saw or experienced after it had become established and not at the very beginning of the event, because he never knew to look for ultimate truth. He then said that he finally learnt to look for the origin and then he found the *builder of this 'house'*:

*Anekajāti samsāram sandhāvissam anibbisam
Gahakārakam gavesanto: dukkhā jāti punappunam
Gahakāraka diṭṭo'si puna geham na khāhasi,
Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā, gahakūtam visamkitham;
Visankhāragatam cittam tanhānam khayam ajjhagā*

(Through many a birth in *samsāra* have I wandered in vain, seeking the builder of this ‘house’ . Repeated birth is indeed suffering! O house-builder, you are seen! You will not build this house again. For all your rafters are broken and your ridge-pole shattered. My mind has reached the unconditioned: I have attained the destruction of cravings – **Buddha’s ‘Song of Victory’ – Dhammapada 153-154)**

Seeing the beginning of each breath before it manifests needs a very sharp and subtle type of mindfulness. Ideally, the yogi would watch for the moment before the beginning of the in/out –breath. Then the yogi will see how the initial phase of the breath commences, from being very refined to gradually becoming coarse. This would be like patiently watching the sky before the onset of the sunrise, and seeing how the sun gradually emerges. The Buddha, during the first watch of the night of his enlightenment (i.e. between 6 .00 – 10.00pm) reflected on the *paṭiccasamuppāda* in ascending order – to reflect on the known dhamma by starting from the unknown. And he thought of tracing every breath to its very beginning and just before that, when the intention (*cetana*) to take the in-breath has been occurred. The Buddha ventured to see the very beginning of every event and realized that each ‘event’ in our lives occurred due to a ‘cause’ and not due to any other external influence or force or due an accident . Due to each ‘cause’ there will be the ‘effect’. And this indeed is the teaching in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*:

*Iti imasmim sati asmin sati
Imassuppada idamm...*

Venerable Assaji’s teaching to the Brahman Upatissa (the future Venerable Sāriputta), described this same teaching.:

***Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesam hetum tathāgatho āha,
tesañ ca yo nirodho
evamvādī mahāsamano***

(Of those things that arise from a cause,
The Thathāgatha has told the cause,
And also what their cessation is;
This is the doctrine of the Great Recluse)

The Buddha goes further to explain that if one is able to repeatedly see the cessation (*nirodha*) of what arose, then, and only then they would see *nibbāna*. This requires an exceptionally strong mindfulness.

It is common knowledge that everyone likes to see the beginning of things – for instance the birth of a baby or a blooming flower. No one likes to see a death of a person or a fading flower. Therefore the Buddha skillfully encourages the yogi to first see the arising of events (in this case the in/out-breath) and then gradually he encourages the yogi to watch the inevitable cessation of the same breath. This teaching paves the way to see *nirodha* and thereby realization of *nibbāna*.

This doctrine is diametrically opposed to the traditional scientific teachings which use reductionism as the basis of arriving at the cause of disease or any other activity. The Buddha's teaching on the *paṭiccasamuppāda* is based on the fundamental 'cause and effect' doctrine – *avijjā paccaya sankhāra* – ignorance is the cause of formations, and then shows that with the removal of ignorance the formations cease. This is a very holistic teaching.

During the second insight knowledge (*paccaya pariggaha ñāna*) the yogi understands this experientially because they

see the arising and the ceasing of each breath or the rise and fall of the abdomen, clearly. But when the yogi approaches the third insight knowledge – *sammassana ñāna* – they see the beginning, middle and end of each event. This is an extremely valuable experience. During the fourth stage of purification, *kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi* (purification by overcoming doubt) all doubts that may exist about the cause or arising of events are dispelled. The yogi realizes that everything happens due to a cause, and not due to some external person, creator-god or some other force. To arrive at this realization the yogi should have necessarily passed the stages of purification – *sīla-visuddhi*, *citta-visuddhi* and *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*, and theoretical knowledge alone will not be sufficient.

However, in order to reach this stage of practice the yogi should be able to encounter all sensory transactions with detached mindfulness or choiceless awareness. They would also have adequate sense-restraint and would have practiced, '*in the seeing let there be only the seeing*' – the popular teaching given by the Buddha to Bahiya (SN). The yogi should have a sufficient amount of theoretical knowledge (*suta-mayā ñāna*) to appreciate this profound dhamma and to understand its relationship to the practice of meditation.

Dhamma Talk 2

Katamoca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo?

*Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhārapaccayā viññānam
viññānapaccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam
salāyatanāpaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā
vedanāpaccayā tanhā, tanhāpaccayā upādānam
upādāna paccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti
jātipaccayā jarāmaranam soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-
upāyāsā sambhavanti.*

‘Bhikkhus, what is meant by the doctrinal title
Paṭiccasamuppāda?

It means that :

With ignorance as condition, volitional formations
come to be;

With volitional formations as condition consciousness
comes to be;

With consciousness as condition mentality-materiality
come to be;

With mentality-materiality as condition the six sense
bases come to be;

With the six sense bases as condition contact comes
to be;

With contact as condition feeling comes to be;

With feeling as condition craving comes to be;

With craving as condition clinging comes to be;

With clinging as condition existence comes to be;

With existence as condition birth comes to be;
With birth as condition, aging and death,
sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair
come to be.
Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering’.

The *Paṭiccasamuppāda* can be described in one phrase: ‘conditioned or dependant origination’, i.e. it is because of ignorance (*avijjā*) that volitional formations (*sankhāra*) come to be etc. In this manner the twelve links that comprise this doctrine has been described. This is essential in understanding the Buddha’s teaching of non-self (*anattā*), because in other faiths the cause of anything is attributed to an unseen and non-verifiable creator-god. This belief has been questioned by certain Buddhists and they ask ‘who was responsible for the creation of the creator-god?’ Similarly, non-Buddhists and those who challenge the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* question the origin of the first link of this chain - ignorance.

They ask ‘where did *avijjā* (ignorance) originate from?’

The answer to that is: from taints or cankers (*āsava*).

***Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo,
āsava nirodho avijjā nirodhā***

(With the arising of taints, ignorance arises
With the cessation of taints, ignorance ceases)

Then the question is posed: how do taints arise?

The answer is, due to ignorance. Now we can see the interdependence between the taints and ignorance. Yet, those

with confidence and faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha accept that *avijjā* is the root cause and the first link to this chain of dependant origination. Therefore each time formations or volition (*sankhāra*) are formed, they are formed without our knowledge. During our travels in *samsāra* we have repeatedly created sankhāra due to *avijjā*. *Sankhāra* (formations/preparations) and *cetanā* (volition) are described as synonyms in the *Pali Canon*. Therefore, if at any given moment we create *cetanā*, that is entirely due to *avijjā*. Therefore all new thoughts, ideas and creations that we entertain are entirely due to *avijjā*. We don't realize this because we feel that some *sankhāra* or *cetanā* are good or wholesome and that only some are unwholesome.

We learn this when studying Buddhism and tend to believe that some categories of *cetanā/sankhāra* are actually good or wholesome.

Sankhāra is a critical but complicated term to understand. In the Buddha's teachings as we read in the Pāli Canon *sankhāra* are described in several ways and according to context it has different shades of meaning.

1. Formations or *sankhāra*, with reference to meritorious 'kamma-formations' (*puññ'ābhisankhāra*), de-meritorious 'kamma - formations' (*apuññ'ābhisankhāra*) and those which don't belong to either or the imperturbables (*āneñj'ābhisankhāra*).
2. As *sankhārakhandha* – the fourth group of existence (*nāma dhamma*) referred to when describing the five aggregates - *khandas* (*rūpa,vedanā,sañña,sankhāra, viññāna*)
3. It includes all things formed (*sankhata*) and conditioned, and includes all phenomena of existence.

Hence the famous line – *sabbe sankhāra dukkha, sabbe sankhāra anicca*

(All formations/preparations lead to suffering. All formations/preparations are impermanent)

However, when understanding the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* we learn that, a yogi established in purification by virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*) first, and then purification of the mind (*citta visuddhi*) and thereafter the purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*), will approach the fourth stage of purification of doubt - (*kankhāvitarana-visuddhi*). It is only then that they will experientially realize that all types of *cetanā* and *sankhāra* will lengthen our journey in *samsāra* and not shorten it. Our task would be to first, try and understand this truth at least theoretically and subsequently see if we can arrive at this realization during our meditation practice. Therefore I think it is important to understand the two terms *avijjā* and *sankhāra* with some depth.

When describing *sankhāra* as one of the five aggregates (*khandas*) – *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, sankhāra, viññāna* - *sankhāra* is one of the five aggregates that lead to craving and clinging, and thereby give rise to suffering and discontent (i.e. *dukkha*). *Sankhāra* in this context represents our likes/dislikes, our addictions/preferences and our views, opinions and personality traits which help us to construct and protect the ‘I/me/mine’ concept. Our entire life is spent justifying and safe guarding this ‘I/me/mine’ concept and we go through immense trouble and pain to achieve this task. However, we fail to pause a moment to see if this eternal battle helps us to achieve peace and tranquility in the mind. We fail to examine with a clear mind as to whether this struggle to justify and protect our ‘self-view’ will be of benefit to us in the long-term. Most people come to this realization and self-inquiry only when faced with the

final thought-moment at death. At this critical juncture, our preferences and addictions don't offer any form of help or solace. This is why the Buddha asked us to examine all *sankhāra* while alive and with a clear mind. Then we will realize that these *sankhāra* arise due to an 'agenda' created due to *avijjā*.

When the Buddha pronounced :

"Sabbe Sankhāra Dukkha, Sabbe Sankhāra Anicca" – even the deities are supposed to have shuddered. This is because this statement is most deep and profound and it clearly states that all *sankhāra* lead to suffering. It shatters the perception of 'permanency' and makes those with the desire to perpetuate their lives and personalities, fearful. Those who are addicted to and are intoxicated by the notion of everlasting sensual-gratification, their status in society, wealth and power, are jolted by this statement of the Buddha. Because this dents their perception of what is conventionally accepted as truth. When we understand that these *sankhāra* are all created as a result of *avijjā* we begin to question the concept of 'I/me/mine' and the traits that we familiarly referred to as 'mine'. We then begin to understand that these five aggregates which we crave and cling to, eventually give us suffering at every stage and that this is happening in accordance to an agenda that we have not formulated.

If we are to examine this further and if we are to examine this teaching of the Buddha using *vipassanā*, we need to ensure that we have first achieved the initial purifications, i.e. *sīla-visuddhi* (perfecting our virtue by subduing societal transgressions = *vītikama kilesa*) and *citta-visuddhi* (by suppressing the five hindrances = *pariyuttāna kilesa*, either

temporarily or through *jhānic* experiences) . It is only after these two preliminary purifications have been achieved that the meditator can realize that beyond mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) there is no ‘self’ or soul (*jīva ātma*). It is only after that the yogi will become eligible to understand the *paṭīccasamuppāda* at an experiential level. During the first two purifications (*sīla-visuddhi* and *citta-visuddhi*) the yogi can practise by observing Buddhism as a religion. However, after they progress into the deeper purifications like *maggāmaggañānadassana visuddhi* and *kankhāvitarana visuddhi* stages, then they would need to take up the Dhamma instead of Buddhism as a religion. Then they will be capable of understanding the *paṭīccasamuppāda* and realize that *avijjā* is the sole reason for the creation of *sankhāra*, and that therefore the latter will always lead to suffering.

Let us examine this term *avijjā*. This is commonly described as ‘ignorance’, ‘foolishness’, ‘darkness’, ‘delusion’ and a general lack of understanding. But more recently scholars have given two faces to *avijjā* – *miccāpatipatti avijjā* and *appatipatti avijjā*. *Appatipatti avijjā* means a lack of worldly knowledge. *Miccāpatipatti avijjā* means the belief that what is incorrect is correct. We use the former to hide the latter type of *avijjā* and therefore the latter becomes more dangerous. We will have to go through a de-learning process to be rid of *miccāpatipatti avijjā*. In *vipassanā* practise, we address this upfront and directly confront our own defilements = *kilesas* by examining the *vītikama kilesa*, *pariyuttāna kilesa* and the *anusaya kilesa* (dormant defilements). Even a person who is well endowed with knowledge and skills, and academic or professional achievements will continue to have these types of defilements, and will thus traverse *samsāra* endlessly. Therefore, the Buddha urged us to direct our attention to this dangerous type of *avijjā*

(*miccāpatipatti avijjā*) and to make all effort to eradicate it. Similarly, if we feel that not knowing the *tripitaka* or the *Pāli* language is an obstacle to learning meditation, that is completely unfounded. In fact scholarly knowledge about the Dhamma can even be a hindrance to learning meditation.

Everyone has some amount of conceit (*māna*) about who we are or what we are, or about knowledge/skills that we may possess. We all have a tendency to ‘measure’ ourselves, as being better or more knowledgeable or wiser than some others. Or on the contrary we may feel we are not up to standard and that we are inferior to another, in one or more ways. All of this is due to our ignorance. As a result of this, when we are presented with a variety of options we have the tendency to choose and cling to whatever is compatible with our personality and individual preferences or our addictions. Consequently, we reject many other options. This preferential selection is the way we create formations – *sankhāra*. The reason why we promptly identify our preferred option, is because we don’t realize that we are creating *sankhāra* in the process and this is entirely due to *avijjā*. *Avijjā* prevents us from taking a balanced and unbiased decision in relation to this selection process. This is the dangerous relationship between *avijjā* and *sankhāra*, and this is how *kamma* is accumulated. Even if we are presented with very wholesome and spiritually uplifting options due to our past stores of merit, *avijjā* will prevent us selecting any of those and instead it will make us select another.

Let us apply this same principle to our meditative practice. At a given time we have the options of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling or thinking. We have the eye and form (*rūpa*) that meets the eye (*rūpa-rūpa*), similarly the ear and sound that meets the ear (*sabbdha-rūpa*), the tongue and taste (*rasa-rūpa*), the nose and smell (*gandha-*

rūpa), skin and touch (*phoṭṭhabba-rūpa*), and the mind and the dhamma that meets the mind. However, we can ‘know’ only one sensory transaction at a given time, and we will never be able to predict which transaction will occur during the very next thought-moment (*cittakkhana*). The choice we make about which sense object to choose at a given moment is entirely beyond our control. The simile I use to describe this phenomenon is, that the moment before lightning strikes there is no indication whatsoever that lightning is about to strike. No one can predict that occurrence. The *avijjā* we have is so powerful that there is no opportunity for us to pause and reflect on these individual sensory transactions, since we habitually indulge in each sensory transaction as soon as it occurs.

The Buddha advised us to attempt the exercise of noting each sensory transaction as soon as it occurs, before we become old. He advised us to sit in seclusion, with our eyes closed, in a place with minimal sounds and smells. Thereafter, the Buddha said to bring the yogi’s attention to the body and to note the breath as it occurs naturally. During this exercise the yogi would be shutting off five sense objects (including the mind/thoughts, since the attention will be on the body), and they will entirely focus on the breath and where it touches the body most prominently. This is a noble research exercise recommended by the Buddha – an *ariya-paryeshana*. We then realize how difficult it is to keep the mind in one place, in this instance on the body (*kāyānupassana*). The mind habitually runs after thoughts, sights, tastes, smells and sounds. This is the nature of the mind. For long it has been fed with multiple sense impressions, and it has learnt to pursue every sense impingement as soon as it occurs, habitually indulging in one or more of these. The difficulty of taming such a stubborn and obsti-

nate mind becomes evident only when we try to focus on one object.

This is a very distressing experience to a novice yogi. Even the most educated, powerful and most accomplished yogi will invariably face this frustrating experience initially. The yogi who has a lot of conceit and arrogance will find it more difficult to cope with this situation than the simple yogi who starts this process with a lot of humility. When a yogi begins to realize that he has no control over which sense object the mind will next chase after, he feels humbled. But some yogis may feel defeated and remorseful with such an experience. With gentle encouragement the yogi should attempt to stay with *kāyānupassana* for a while longer. The yogi may then begin to realize that he can stay with the breath a few moments longer, maybe a couple of breaths more than the previous attempt. Then again distracting thoughts, sounds and pains may disturb the yogi. With determination they should try to stay a while longer with the breath. At a certain point he will realize that no will or determination can prevent this straying mind and we are then compelled to surrender to the reality.

Avijjā is so strong and powerful that it will not allow us to take the correct Path, but instead we will create formations (*sankhāra*) and complicate our journey by taking different diversions. The skilled yogi will understand this with wisdom and not be remorseful. Such a yogi will stay with the breath as and when he can despite sounds, pains and thoughts with extreme humility. If the yogi can continue in this manner, after a while he will notice a different facet in the *sankhāra*. The Buddha refers to this as – *passambhayam kāyasankhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati*. i.e, the the calming down of the breath.

As I described earlier, the term *sankhāra*, according to

context has different shades of meaning.

In the case of the meditator's vocabulary, the Buddha gives a subtle meaning to the word *sankhāra* i.e. *kāya sankhāra*, *vacī sankhāra* and *mano sankhāra*. *Kāya sankhāra* is described as the breath. *Passambhayam kāyasankhāram* is the calming of the breath – also referred to as *kāya sankhāra samatha*. This is a significant achievement and is a common feature to a *vipassanā* yogi as well as a *samatha* practitioner. It should also be noted that *vacī sankhāra* (i.e. *vitakka*, *vicāra* or internal chatter, word formations) also calms down when this state is reached. But we must remember that when contemplation or labeling of the in/out-breath is done, that is also *vitakka* and *vicāra*, or a form of internal chatter.

Vitakka = Focusing attention on the in/out-breath

Vicāra = Knowing the in-breath as the in-breath and the out-breath as the out-breath, and not vice-versa.
It's a form of investigative knowledge.

Meditators (*samatha* as well as *vipassanā* practitioners) can use these dhammas as tools. But they should know the difference between *sammā vitakka* and *miccā vitakka*, and similarly *sammā vicāra* and *miccā vicāra*. If the yogi finds that his mind is discursive and that it is difficult to prevent from straying, then he can contemplate on the in and out-breath, i.e. use *sammā vitakka*, *sammā vicāra*. But yogis will realize that when *ānāpānasati* becomes very refined and subtle, contemplation on the breath becomes difficult. Similarly, it becomes difficult to identify the characteristics of the in and out-breath. Initially, the yogi will describe this phenomenon as one where he can't identify the in from the out-breath. If the yogi is unaware of *kāya sankhāra*,

vaci sankhāra samatha, (that this is the natural calming of bodily and verbal formations) he may interpret this occurrence as a loss of *sati* or *samādhi*. A person who has no clear understanding about *sankhāra*, or someone who has identified *sankhāra* with his personality, preferences and addictions, will be anxious when the *kāya sankhāra*, *vaci sankhāra* begin to cease and when the in/out-breath become indistinct. Such a person will voluntarily take many deep breaths, because the coarse breath feels like ‘home’ in terms of familiarity, rather than the subtle and refined breath. In fact, the ‘disappearance’ of the breath may seem like a mistake in the meditation practice and therefore he will never allow the breath to become calm, instead he will keep contemplating the in/out-breath.

On the other hand, if such a meditator allows the breath to naturally settle down he may fall asleep or he may start doubting as to whether he will faint or get a stroke or get paralysed.

Due to one or more of the above, such a meditator will not allow the natural cessation of the in/out-breath or *kāya-sankhāra samatha*, *vaci-sankhāra samatha*. This is referred to as *miccā patipatthi avijjā* – the belief that what is incorrect is in fact correct. This will always hinder the progress of meditation. This is the importance of listening to the Dhamma and understanding that during *ānāpānasati* when the breath becomes calm and refined, and when the meditator is not disturbed by the sensory impingements and the mind turns inwards, *citta-visuddhi* (purification of mind) will ensue.

When *kāya sankhāra*, *vaci-sankhāra* ceases the need for oxygen also lessens and the breath calms down significantly. The differences previously experienced between the in and out-breath also diminishes. Teachers advise that yo-

gis should be prepared for this experience, by initially noting the characteristics of the in and out-breath well and then note the transformation that occurs in each breath.

A simile that can be used to describe this phenomena is when uncooked rice and water are placed in a pot, and made to boil. Initially the rice and water are separate and discrete from one another. But once the water begins to boil, the rice cooks in it and ends up as a porridge called *cunjee*. The in and out-breaths, in a similar fashion cease to be discrete from one another and *vitakka* and *vicāra* cease. This is correct and is described as *kāya sankhāra samatha* - calming of bodily formations, i.e, *Passambhayam kāyasankhāram* or the calming of the breath is significant progress in meditation. Unfortunately, the unprepared yogi will not appreciate and master this experience, but instead, they will breathe deeply or fall asleep or stop the meditation due to doubt. These are all manifestations of *miccā patipatthi avijjā*. The Buddha has said that unless the meditator has followed the advice of a teacher (*parathogosa*), it will be extremely difficult to become free of these doubts, and that he may stagnate in the practise.

Such a meditator would have perfected *sīla-visuddhi* and the factors needed for *citta-visuddhi* are also in place, but the *diṭṭhi* is incorrect, and this is why the yogi believes that taking deep breaths is the correct step. If however, the yogi masters the correct technique after many mistakes and is able watch the calming of the breath (*kāya sankhāra samatha*) with a balanced, undisturbed mind then it will be a huge achievement. This would also mean that the yogi has mastered *kāyānupassana*. It is only such a yogi that would qualify to begin the exercise on *citta sankhāra* , i.e, *vedanā* and *sañña* (feelings and perceptions).

In *suttas* such as *Ānāpānasati sutta*, *Girimānanda sutta*,

Satipatthāna sutta, the section on *kāyānupassana* is described as:

Dīgham vā assasanto, Dīgham assasāmī ti pajānāti

Dīgham vā passasanto, Dīgham passasāmī ti pajānāti

(When breathing in a long breath, he knows: ‘I am breathing in a long breath’. When breathing in a short breath, he knows: I am breathing in a short breath’)

Rassam vā assasanto, Rassam assasāmī ti pajānāti

Rassam vā passasanto, Rassam passasāmī ti pajānāti

(When breathing out a long breath, he knows: ‘I am breathing out a long breath’. When breathing out a short breath, he knows: I am breathing out a short breath’)

Sabbakāya paṭisamvedī assasissāmī’tī sikkhati

Sabbakāya paṭisamvedī passasissāmī’tī sikkhati

(When breathing he is totally aware of the entire breath as if face to face with the entirety of the in breath and out breath).

At this stage the yogi is able to keep his attention continuously on the breath, despite sounds, pains and thoughts. Thereafter the yogi may start to not feel the breath. He may find the in and out breath indistinct and very subtle. This is referred to as:

Passambhayam kayasankhāram assasissāmī’tī sikkhati

Passambhayam kayasankhāram passasissāmī’tī sikkhati

(Calming the entire process I shall breathe in, calming the entire process I shall breathe out)

This is when the yogi feels uncomfortable and restless and may even feel frightened about what may happen next. Teachers advise the yogi to continue with meditation disregarding the discomfort he may feel, and advise that this is a stage when *sankhāra* are lessening and where *avijjā* is diminishing, and how one should appreciate this as an important stage in one's meditation practice. If the yogi can remain in this situation and learn to appreciate this state of being disconnected with the sensual world, it is referred to as *nirāmisā sukkha* – as opposed to *āmisā sukkha*. For the first time the yogi will not be bombarded by the six sense world and its impingements.

This is described as:

Pītipatisamvedī assasissāmī'tī sikkhati

Pītipatisamvedī passasissāmī'tī sikkhati

Sukhapatisamvedī assasissāmī'tī sikkhati

Sukhapatisamvedī passasissāmī'tī sikkhati

(Experiencing rapture, I shall breathe in, experiencing rapture I shall breathe out. Experiencing bliss, I shall breathe in, experiencing bliss I shall breathe out)

Thereafter, the yogi will experience a new situation where he is faced with various phenomena at the mind level.

Cittasankhāra paṭisamvedī assasissāmī'tī sikkhati

Cittasankhāra paṭisamvedī passasissāmī'tī sikkhati

(Experiencing mental formations (feelings and perceptions) I will breathe in, Experiencing mental formations -feelings and perceptions- I will breathe out)

In this situation the yogi understands that although the six sense impingements are not in force, he knows that within the mind there are certain dhammas that are manifesting. These dhammas do not manifest when the six sense world is in operation. These are the nāma dhamma that we have brought with us in *samsāra*, namely *vedanā*, *saññā* and *sankhāra*. These may be images that are strange and inappropriate, depicting people, situations or events. Similarly the yogi may hear bizarre sounds, smell strange odours and so on. These images, thoughts or sounds may have no connection with one another and may seem totally out of place. If the yogi claims ownership to these mental phenomena as ‘mine, me or I’ then it will be very disconcerting and distressing, and may lead to remorse and doubt in the yogi’s mind.

The Buddha advised such a yogi who has mastered *kāyānupassanā* and achieved *kāya sankhāra samatha*, that he has now ‘graduated’ to the state where he is face to face with the mind, and its manifestations i.e . *Cittasankhāra*. These manifest without any intention or volition – *asanskhārikha* - on the part of the yogi and therefore the Buddha advised us not to claim these as me/mine. But our ignorance always prevents us from disclaiming. These are what the yogi had stored in the deep recesses of the mind and they are now getting an opportunity to be exposed. This is a very healthy situation, a healing process and a time when unwanted ‘storage bins’ are being cleaned. Instead of understanding this, if the yogi reacts and responds to these manifestations, he will not progress in his meditation. Please remember that these *cittasankhāra* come

and go uninvited, and we shouldn't get disturbed. Just as much as the sky does not get affected by the clouds that pass by or just as much as the silver screen in the cinema will not get scorched by the scene of a raging fire that is projected on to it, the yogi should disclaim all such manifestations and remain unaffected. It is only if we react to these *cittasankhāra*, that we will activate our *kilesa* and collect *kamma* and if we do so, then it is entirely due to the *miccāpatipatti avijjā*. In this stage of the meditation practise the yogi is taught to simply sit by the side of a river and only watch the river flow. Do not attempt to put the fingers in the water, because they will get wet and the flow will get disturbed. Simply watching the flowing water with no reaction is the most significant *dāna pāramitha* (perfection on generosity) one can accomplish. Wetting the fingers and disturbing the water is the creation of *sankhāra*.

At this stage the yogi will realize that everything is mind-made and mind-created, and may even wonder if he was dreaming. But if the yogi waits with patience, these *cittasankhāra* too will calm down and cease. This was the advise the Buddha gave us. During this crucial stage in our meditation we must ensure our *sīla* is perfect and that we have no conceit (*māna*) – either superior or inferiority complexes. The yogi's mental health should be perfect. If on the other hand we have *miccāpatipatti avijjā*, *miccā diṭṭhi* and *ayonisōmanasikāra* (wrong view and unwise attention) the yogi will not progress further. During this stage the yogi's faith (*saddhā*) towards the Buddha must be not superficial (*amūlika saddhā*, *prasāda saddhā*) but it should be deep and penetrative *saddhā* (*okappana saddhā*). That the Buddha taught us what he experienced and that it leads to the betterment of humanity, needs to be understood and appreciated. Therefore the yogi should have immense faith

and confidence in the Buddha, and be willing to sacrifice anything for this Dhamma.

The *cetasika* called *adhimokkha* – which makes the yogi know that this is indeed the correct Path – begins to take root. He then knows, when *cittasankhāra* cease what *upekkha* (equanimity) really means and the high level of *sati* experienced. He begins to understand that *nibbāna* can be experienced when *sankhāra* ceases, at least at a theoretical level and that the cessation of all formations - *Sabba sankhāra samatha* is realizable. *Cittasankhāra* or *manosankhāra* (i.e. *vedanā* and *saññā*) are more subtle and more difficult to encounter since they are not coarse and obvious like *kāya sankhāra* and *vaci sankhāra*. The Buddha's teaching is to allow these to appear and simply watch and let go. Some yogis may feel that they should engage in other meditations at this stage, such as contemplating on impurities of the body (*asubha bhāvanā*) or the Buddha's qualities (*Buddhānussati*) or contemplate on impermanence, suffering and non-self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*) or engage in loving kindness meditation (*metta bhavanā*). All such meditations or reflections will be creating formations (*sankhāra*) at this stage and will only lengthen our journey in *samsāra* and not shorten it. All what we need to do at this stage in our meditation, is to not do anything. We need to simply watch the calming down of all *sankhāra*. But that becomes the most difficult thing. Our *tanha, māna, diṭṭhi* will prevent us from remaining inactive during this stage. If our aim is to paralyse and render inert, *tanha, māna, diṭṭhi* then we should be determined to not respond in any way or claim as me/mine, when *Cittasankhāra* manifest during the deeper stages of meditation.

We need to value and appreciate the Theravāda tradition, since each milestone encountered during a yogi's med-

itative Path has been clearly outlined, so that the directions are very clear and unambiguous. The pitfalls in the journey have also been identified. Unfortunately, this teaching is not appreciated by many. Instead of developing one's own practice in accordance with this precious teaching; ritualistic practices, Bodhi tree *pūja* and similar activities like flag carrying and bell ringing have taken precedence. We have also lost the ability to tolerate other religious worship and prayers, and even competitive *pāritta* chanting has been resorted to in certain places. This is just the opposite of what is taught in relation to calming the formations.

Until the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa Kingdoms, the Theravāda tradition and the Dhamma had been in practice. Yet after foreign invasions and the prominence given to indulging in sensual pleasures, and the pursuance of fame and fortune, the meditation practice fell into second place. Religion took precedence and the Dhamma took second place. *Miccāpatipatti avijjā* became full blown and rampant. Anyone who knew the tripitaka by memory or was able to give Dhamma Talks effectively was held in high esteem, even though such a person's virtue, concentration and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) were not optimal. Like giving precedence to addressing the lack of worldly knowledge (*appatipatti avijjā*), similarly Religion was given a higher place than the Dhamma.

My preceptor and teacher, Venerable Ñānārāma undertook extensive research to see how and at which point the *Vidarshana Lineage* got extinct. He discovered that after a serious struggle and great hardship, the *Vidarshana Lineage* became non-existent amongst the Sinhala Buddhists in this country. Venerable Ñānārāma was ordained in 1913 at the age of thirteen. For many years he visited ancient monasteries, read volumes of ola leaves and discussed with many

people about the possibility of reviving the *Vidarshana* practise. But from everyone he only got a negative answer. The lack of teachers, the lack of a preceding generation of practitioners and the lack of confidence of a possible resurgence of the *Vidarshana* practise, were the reasons that they cited. Those people felt comfortable in keeping their *sīla* only and not attempting any further meditative development. However, subsequently, with the advice and guidance from the Burmese meditation masters, Venerable Ñānārāma was able to revive this tradition in Sri Lanka.

If the meditator is clearly advised on the road map on the *vipassana* practise and if the miles stones as well as the hurdles and pit falls are clearly enumerated, and if he is advised on what is *miccāpatipatti avijjā* even though the yogi may have issues connected to *appatipatti avijjā*, the journey will be a smooth one. Sayadaw U Panditha had invited Venerable Ñānārāma to document this research and resurgence of the *vipassana* practise in Sri Lanka so that future generations can use these as guide lines. In the famous book '*Vidarshana parapura*' the evidence of the massive effort made by Venerable Ñānārāma in documenting this for our benefit is shown. We find that until this valuable meditation practice was documented and reactivated, the only practices engaged in were the four protective meditations like loving kindness, virtues of the Buddha, impurities of the body and contemplation on death. Those had been practiced as mere recitations done before the statue of the Buddha, and there was no record of *jhānic* practices either.

It was in such a milieu that, through his own experience Venerable Ñānārāma taught that after extensively practicing *kāyānupassanā* (either through *ānāpānasati* or rise and fall of the abdomen), the yogi should watch the calming down of the object, e.g, breath, and allow *kāya sankhāra*

samatha, to naturally take place. He then advises that, although *kāya sankhāra samatha* has taken place, the yogi must then be aware of the *cittasankhāra* that lies hidden beneath the carpet and that the knotty issues lie therein. *Kāya sankhāra samatha* is not unique to Buddhism because Hindu meditators, Catholics, Islamic practitioners and others have all practiced this. But no one other than the Buddha taught that the *anusaya* (dormant defilements that lie within the deeper layers of our minds) can be observed by a human being, and that this is possible after a meditator calms the bodily formations. However, the Buddha cautioned that certain conditions need to be fulfilled by the yogi in order to experience the manifestation of *anusaya dhamma*, and that mastering the *tripitaka* was not one of them. Nor is it essential to engage in rites and rituals, and ceremonial worship. In fact the Noble Eight Fold Path and the 37 Enlightenment Factors clearly indicate this. In my experience such ritualistic worship and activity will only hamper the progress in meditation, since they would actually interfere with calming the formations – *sankhāra samatha*.

The yogi should therefore act with a lot of caution. Whilst swimming upstream, and whilst one's own *anusaya* will attempt to surreptitiously veer the yogi in the direction of praise, fame and accolades, with wisdom he should avoid falling into the trap by pretending to not see, hear or understand. Such a yogi will then realize that even though he had been successful in *Kāya sankhāra samatha* that the *Miccāpatipatti avijjā* plays a big role and through the emergence of *cittasankhāra* he will feel challenged. This is the importance of discussing the meditation practice with an experienced *kalyāṇamitta* (*parathogoshā*). No one will be able to resolve these riddles on his own.

The difference between science and *sankhāra* is that,

the former will always require us to turn our minds outwards and investigate externally, often ending up with no complete result. In the case of the latter, the investigation is always internal with the mind turning inwards, and if pursued with accuracy with the Buddha's advice the results are reached. Even the Buddha had to undergo extensive research for six years before he found the truth. But that was an internal search for the Noble Truth - *ariyapariyeshana*. Today we are more than privileged. We have the Buddha's teaching clearly laid out before us, we have been forewarned about the hurdles we can encounter on this Path and we have precious opportunities to learn the Dhamma and learn the meditative Path. And we may never get these opportunities again.

The Commentaries urge us to strengthen and refine the Spiritual Faculties – *Indriya Dhamma* – (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) using various methods so that we can accomplish this *ariyapariyeshana* with success:

Sappāyakiriyāya sampādiṭṭhi – provide all necessary facilities to develop the meditation. Sit for meditation daily and allow the meditation to go as deep as possible.

Sācaccakiriyāya sampādiṭṭhi – meditate at the same time every day

Sātaccakiriyāya sampādiṭṭhi – the meditation should be done with great devotion and care

As long as *sankhāra* (*kāya, vacī, mano/citta*) are diminishing, consider that the meditation is progressing well and that it is helping to shorten *samsāra*. Any form of collection or accumulation will increase *sankhāra* (e.g. wealth, status, assets, skills, thoughts, creations, merit) and thereby lengthen *samsāra*. Relinquishing or cessation (i.e. *visankhāra*) will shorten *samsāra*. The yogi will feel a sense

of immense loneliness, disorientation and monotony during this stage of the practice. Many people can't tolerate this and therefore will open the eyes to see if everything is in order and in the process will re-introduce the perceptions that the yogi is comfortable with. The nature of *nibbāna* is that it is not decorated by anything, and it is not describable in words. And it is not possible to reach *nibbāna* using the cause and effect theory. Although the realization of cause and effect will help the yogi to get close to *nibbāna* it will always be a 'causeless' dhamma that will push the yogi towards *nibbāna*.

During the finer stages of the meditative Path, the reason why we wish to be connected with familiar perceptions (*saññā*) is entirely due to *miccāpatipatti avijjā* . The repeated listening to *saddhamma*, continuous practice, and discussions with teachers will help in this crucial stage. Watching the cessation of *cittasankhāra* is an art which the yogi must master.

This is extremely difficult and how the Buddha discovered this Dhamma entirely on his own is more than a mystery. Moreover, how the Buddha taught this complex and advanced Dhamma to uninstructed worldlings like us who spend our lives pursuing pleasures of the six senses, is intriguing. It is even more fascinating to imagine how this Dhamma lasted for 2600 years and how it has been transmitted to those like us by dedicated bhikkhus and practitioners. Yet, we grumble and complain about the slightest problems in relation to our practice, and often have a very negative attitude. This is a sad situation. But the Buddha encourages us to take up the practice with vigour and instills the urgency for this journey which is akin to swimming upstream – *patisothagāmi*. The Buddha says that *sīla sikkhā* and *citta sikkhā* we have already started on are tremendous

achievements, and that we should appreciate those. The fact that we realize that *avijjā* and *miccādiṭṭhi* are present in us, and that they need to be addressed through a process of self inquiry and self realization, is a remarkable step in the correct direction. This is a manifestation of humility in a yogi.

The Buddha taught that the cessation of anything signals that suffering is ceasing. All our creations and achievements so far have occurred due to our greed, conceit and self-view (*tanha, māna, diṭṭhi*), and they have or will cause us to suffer eventually. It is only with their cessation that we will see the end of suffering. This is why we teach yogis to watch the cessation of the breath until the very end, because this means that *kāya sankhāra* will have ceased. With absolute alertness and mindfulness we should watch this cessation very carefully with no interference in anyway. If sounds, pains or thoughts manifest during this period we should not be worried but simply watch them cease. Watching this cessation with serious alertness, is the Path taught by the Buddha.

When Venerable Konañña (one of the five ascetics who practiced austerities with the Bodhisatva) heard the first Dhamma discourse (*Dhammacacckapavattana sutta*) by the Buddha and reached the first stage of sainthood (*sotapanna*), he exclaimed:

‘Yamkinci samudaya dhammam

Sabbantham nirodha dhammam’

(Whatever dhamma arises, will be subject to cessation)

Therefore, just as much as every suffering we meet will come to an end; every gain, praise, fortune and achieve-

ment we meet will also come to an end. *Nibbāna* can be found at the cessation.

As stated in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda sutta* just as much as - *avijjāpaccayā sankhārā*, (when ignorance comes to being, formations come to being) - *avijjā atteva asesā viragā nirodha* When ignorance ceases with no residue left, formations cease to be. On the night of his enlightenment during the first watch, the Bodhisatva initially investigated the 'arising' of all dhammas – he watched the arising of the in-breath and the arising of the out-breath (*rūpa dhamma*), and then studied the cause of the arising and the arising of each in/out-breath. i.e. the cause and effect principle – *nāma – rūpa dhamma*. Then he saw how everything that arose (eg, the in/out-breath) ceased.. This is how the Buddha mastered the entire cycle (arising, middle and end) of each in and out-breath, and learnt that nothing in this universe is not subject to the dhamma phenomenon – *uppādha paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, tittassa añña*.

We generally don't realize that everything that arises is subject to ceasing. This is because we habitually see only the arising. If we also pause to watch the cessation of everything that arises, we will then see the inevitable phenomenon that the Buddha urged us to see. Watching the cessation is not exciting or interesting, and this is why we fail to do so.

During the first *vipassanā* insight (*nāma rūpa paricceda ñāna*) we see the middle (coarse and prominent) of the arisen object, e.g. in/out-breath. In the second *vipassanā* insight (*paccaya pariggaha ñāna*) we see the arising and the middle of that same phenomena. In the third *vipassanā* insight (*sammassara ñāna*) we will see the entire object, i.e. the middle, the arising and the cessation. However, the untrained mind will only see the coarse, middle of the breath

and will miss the beginning and the end. With more practice the yogi will begin to see where this coarse breath arose from, i.e. the beginning of the in/out-breath. Once the mind gets more and more trained for this exercise, the yogi will then be able to trace the breath, from the middle, to the arising and finally to the end – the cessation of the breath (*nirodha*) . This is where one can find the ultimate truth. However, since we conventionally only look for the arising, we fail to watch the cessation, and thus will always escape from seeing the truth.

Just as much as *avijjā* causes *sankhāra* , the day *avijjā* ceases *sankhāra* will also cease. That would be the day we will stop all our creations and new developments. We engage in all such activities because we find the present moment unsatisfactory. If we are content and fulfilled with the present moment, we will not wish for new creations. It is the ill will and unhappiness we have towards the present moment that makes us embark upon new creations and new projects and innovations. Therefore the Buddha urges us to be content and be with the present-moment at all times. When we were very young we had no greed, conceit or self-view, we were happy because we had no future projects or plans and we were content with the present moment. With advancing age our greed and ambition increased, and we are never satisfied with whatever we have. We always want more and that is due to our ignorance - *avijjā*.

Learn this dhamma thoroughly experientially and endeavour to see the cessation of all phenomena. You will then see the electric nature of the dhamma which is so much alive and before us. Our aim should be the cessation of all formations - *sabba sankhāra samatha* - and to reach such a stage we need to see the cessation of *kāya sankhāra* first, and then the cessation of *citta sankhāra* (*vedanā* and

saññā), and for this an *ariyaparyeshana* is needed, nothing less. The *Paṭiccasamuppāda* will then come alive and you will realize that this doctrine, instead of spanning several life times becomes visible during every thought-moment, here and now.

Dhamma Talk 3

The term *sankhāra* is described as formations, preparations, constructs or fabrications. But in meditation practice *sankhāra* is given a deeper meaning and is categorized as *Kāya sankhāra*, *vaci sankhāra* and *mano/citta sankhāra* (bodily, verbal and mind-based formations). Each time we act or speak or think, or we plan and construct, and each ‘doing’ that we engage in, we create *sankhāra* and this occurs as a result of ignorance (*avijjā*).

Avijjā operates in two ways:

1. The ignorance we have about our own *kilesa* (defilements) and the fact that they accumulate *kamma* and that *kamma* leads to *vipāka*, (i.e. the phenomenon of cause and effect) and not knowing that this continuous cycle through *samsāra* is due to our own perpetuation of three cycles - *kamma vattha*, *kilesa vattha*, *vipāka vattha*. This category of ignorance, where we fail to realize that we are the cause of our own problems, is referred to as ***appatipatthi avijjā***. Listening to the Word of the Buddha repeatedly and association with *kalyāṇamitta* will help to address this type of ignorance.

2. The ignorance, of thinking that we know many things, when in fact we don’t, is called ***miccāpatipatthi avijjā***. This is quite dangerous because we imagine we know, and when someone tries to point out that we don’t know we look upon it with aversion. Our personality traits and habits form the basis of this imaginary ‘knowledge’, and unfortunately it masquerades as a friend – thus deepening our ignorance

The Buddha taught that both above categories of ignorance operate through our own formations/constructs/preparations or *sankhāra*. In order to realize this experien-

tially we need to calm all formations to a bare minimum – i.e. reach a stage of *sankhāra samatha*. During meditation practice when *sankhāra* are minimized drastically the meditator will be able to experience how ignorance also gets minimized and how it slowly loses its potency. This experience varies with each meditator and he/she will realize this in accordance with the individual's spiritual potential. During this process the meditator will begin to know if the meditation practice is proceeding in the direction of *vipassanā* teaching and towards realization of the Path. The meditator will also know if there is steady progression according to the Buddha's word, or whether there is uncertainty and confusion in one's practise. This understanding and 'self-judgment' is entirely in the hands of the meditator. The meditator's mind (*viññāna*) during this period is critical – because it is the *viññāna* that will prompt the yogi to select the 'correct' or 'incorrect' Path at this juncture in meditation. It is the *viññāna* that will make us 'choose' the correct path as correct or the incorrect path as correct (or vice versa). And the Buddha, with his infinite wisdom and boundless compassion described with clarity this stage of the practice, if not we would not have the capacity nor independent initiative to understand this complex dhamma teaching.

When practicing mindfulness on the body (*kāyagatāsati* or *kāyānupassanā*) and when the attention is on the breath (*ānāpānasati*), after the in/out-breath become refined and less prominent, we reach a state of calming the bodily formations. This is referred to as *passambhayam kāya sankhāram*.

During this stage in meditation we will gradually leave the six-sense world (*kāma loka*) and the mind which is connected to the six senses (*rūparāga pañibaddha viññāna*

or *indriya paṭibaddha viññāna*), and reach a state of mind which is disconnected from external sights, sounds, smells, taste, touch and thoughts . This is a very special state and it is referred to as *anindriya paṭibaddha viññāna*. Here we deal a significant blow to our ignorance - *avijjā*. This becomes very disconcerting and unpleasant. The mind (*viññāna*) feels isolated because it is being systematically deprived of nutriment – i.e, *phassa āhāra* (touch/contact with the in/out-breath), *mano sanċetana āhāra* (thoughts), *kālaṅkārā āhāra* (due to observing *sīla* and the consequent restriction of food intake after midday). At this stage the *viññāna* feels isolated, paralysed and dysfunctional. When ‘trapped’ in this manner the *viññāna* manifests in a variety of bizarre ways attempting to distract the meditator, and these manifestations are described as imperfections of insight – *vipassanā upakkilesa*. This is a critical mile stone in the meditation path and the yogi’s journey towards the ultimate truth.

The meditator’s challenge at this stage is to keep the body and mind stilled, not allowing any provocation or disturbance to gain a foothold. This is where the yogi is in transition – from a state which is known to a state which is unknown, from the conventional truth to the ultimate truth, from the describable to the indescribable. This mind-state has been referred to as ‘magical’ and one that evades description in a conventional sense. Before the time of the Buddha, sages and rishis had experienced similar situations and these have been described in literature. The meditator is now on ‘autopilot’ where the meditation is proceeding on its own and where his connections with the base (the six-sense world) have been made defunct temporally. This is the stage where he faces a vast unknown and he begins to address formations of the mind – *citta/mano saṅkhāra*.

Avijja leads to *sankhāra* and the latter will select or choose a portion of what is presented to the mind, and creates an illusive world of make-believe, thus tricking and deceiving us. *Sankhāra* will 'make up' and 'create' a world by presenting carefully selected data to the *viññāna*, and the *viññāna* accepts all this helplessly. Pre-Buddhist spiritual teachers were cautious when approaching this stage of mind exposure, because they felt that it was the domain of the creator-God . The Buddha however ventured forth with confidence and pursued the exploration of even deeper states of the mind. As yogis we need an extraordinary amount of faith (*saddhā*) when reaching these stages of meditation, and our confidence in the Buddha should be unwavering and strong. Deep and unshakeable faith (*okappana saddhā*), strong effort (*virīya*), continuous and uninterrupted mindfulness - *sati* are essential at this stage (an *arahant's sati* = *vepulla sati*). The *samādhi* in such a yogi is firm and well guarded by *sati* and *upekkha*. This type of *samādhi* is different to the *samādhi* that pre-Buddhist ascetics used to practise. *Paññā* matures substantially and the yogi begins to realize that all the knowledge he had on worldly matters are narrow and trivial in comparison to this extraordinary exposure of the vast mind states and consciousness. The yogi needs to allow the mind to explore these states of consciousness without prejudice and selection. If not we will once again be directed by our likes and dislikes, and our judgments and preferences.

When dealing with and understanding *viññāna* in this manner the yogi must be brave and be willing to gamble with one's life during this experience. He should continuously renew his faith and confidence in the Buddha, and have perfect *sīla*.

The pleasant states of mind the yogi experiences when

reaching such deep states of meditation is referred to as *nirāmisā sukha* (as opposed to *āmisā sukha* = pleasure born out of the senses) or *nekkhamma sīta*. = (pleasure born out of seclusion and relinquishment). The contentment and balance of mind experienced during this stage is directly dependant on the yogi's *sammādiṭṭhi*. Such a yogi will know with foresight that *nibbāna* is such a release and 'letting go'. He would have an idea of what equanimity (*upekkha*) and *sati* is. After repeatedly experiencing this stage in meditation, the yogi will next face a different set of challenges. Māra will then present the yogi with wonderful experiences all of which are illusory. For instance, the yogi may see lights, feel deep tranquility and he/she may experience exceptionally good *sati* and *samādhi*. These 'spiritual traps' are often exceedingly pleasing and the yogi feels he has been endowed with rare spiritual rewards and fame. If the yogi is not forewarned and if he is ill-prepared to face these stages of meditative progress, he/she may get confused and believe that he/she has reached attainments such as *jhāna* or special knowledges (= *abhiññā*) or even stages of sainthood. These wrong assumptions will increase the *kilesa* once again and keep bringing back and tying the yogi to *samsāra* once again. The meditator should be forewarned that these imperfections of insight (*upakkilesa*) are actually the magical illusions created by *viññāna*, and that one must know this with certainty in order to avoid being taken in.

In the typical journey a meditator will first face boredom, monotony, sloth/torpor and much hardships physically . But if he fortifies faith and confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and *sīla* , he will then reap the fruits of the practise provided he remains steadily on the Path and does not fall into these inevitable pit falls.

Viññāna is a deceptive trickster who will never show the

way to *nibbāna*. In fact on the contrary it will pave the way to prolonging *samsāra*. Therefore *viññāna* must be recognized in its true form by the yogi. If not, the yogi may begin to hero-worship these magical illusions thus created by *viññāna* and will sacrifice *sati* and the primary object of meditation that had been developed with so much hardship. The skilful yogi will understand that *Viññāna*, does not belong to ‘me/ mine/I’, and that it is just another ‘creation’ conditioned by formations/preparations (*sankhāra*), and that the latter’s mandate is to trick and deceive the meditator by showing what is not real as real, thereby repeatedly tying him back to *samsāra*. If the yogi is able to transcend these road blocks on the Path he will emerge with a balanced out look towards meditation and life, and with an improved *sati* and *upekkha*. He will be better equipped to face the vicissitudes of life with a sense of spiritual maturity. In fact, the first lessons we learn about remaining unfazed in the face of praise or blame, gain or loss, pleasure or pain, attention or neglect; occur when we reach the stage where the in/out-breath becomes refined during the end of *kāyānupassanā*.

During a recent research study conducted by Daniel Brown it has been shown that irrespective of the subject’s race or religion, after a while during *ānāpānasati* the breath inevitably gets refined (i.e. *kāya sankhāra samatha*). The ‘spiritual benefits’ yogis get during that stage, (eg. peaceful states, lights, coolness, chills, special knowledges = *abhiññā*) are common to Buddhists, Catholics, Hindus and Muslims alike. The difference was that each subject of the research study, attributed the special experiences he/she had had, to their individual spiritual benefactor or to a creator God, as per their individual faith and belief. The Buddha’s teaching explains this scenario very clearly – these are the manifestations of imperfections of insight (*upakkilesa*) and if the yogi

clings to these pleasant experiences or if he develops aversion to unpleasant ones, he will not proceed on the Path. In fact, true *vipassanā* practice begins only after the yogi has passed this stage.

At this stage of spiritual maturity the yogi will learn that *viññāna* will never allow the yogi to proceed towards *nibbāna*, instead it will trick and deceive the yogi at every stage and thereby nourish his self-view. *Sankhāra* always arise due to *tanha*, *māna*, *ditthi*. Similarly *viññāna* which is nourished by *sankhāra* cannot exist without *papañca*, therefore it will use every bit of data, information or assets to nourish the yogi's self-view, conceit and self importance. If the yogi is to forge ahead in the practice without getting deceived by and trapped into the illusory tricks of the *viññāna* he would have to skillfully develop the five spiritual faculties (*saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, *paññā*) and raise it from a level of *indriya* to the level of *bala*. In accordance with the advice given by Venerable Sariputta in the *Paṭi-sambhidhamagga*, an indication that the spiritual faculties have matured - from *indriya dhamma* into a *bala dhamma* - is when, the yogi develops monotony and boredom towards the practice and has decreasing levels of *saddhā*, but yet remains steadfast in the practice - *assadhe nakampethithi saddhā balam*. If on the other hand the yogi loses courage and the ability to face this situation, the *viññāna* will take the upper hand.

Therefore the yogi should be prepared to face these eventualities and not lose heart when he feels that *saddhā* has decreased in intensity. In fact *saddhā* (and the other spiritual faculties) are all *sankatha dhammas* (they are conditioned and prepared) and are therefore impermanent and are necessarily subject to change. The yogi will begin to realize this. This would also be an important opportunity

to learn how to face the vicissitudes of life. The mature yogi will remain equanimous in the presence of decreasing *saddhā* as well as when *saddhā* is strong. This would indicate that *saddhā* has developed in to ‘*bala*’ and that we will not be allowing *viññāna* to take advantage of the situation.

Similarly in case of the energy (*virīya*) - even experienced yogis may find it difficult to keep high levels of energy during meditation. Their posture may stoop, they may salivate, tear, and various manifestations of the physical body may occur and they may become very disheartened. This is why the Buddha teaches us that we are helpless in such scenarios because the body/posture is not ‘me or mine’. We have absolutely no control or executive power to determine what the body will do or become. The challenge is to be unfazed in the face of such manifestations, and high levels of *saddhā* and *sīla* are necessary. When *virīya* develops, from *indriya* levels to *bala* level, the yogi will not be disappointed whether *virīya* is present or not, and he will then disclaim all such bizarre manifestation as not ‘me/mine/self’. If not, once again *viññāna* will take advantage of the situation and we will take these traits with us in our continuous saṃsāric journey.

In the case of *sati* the Buddha went to extraordinary lengths to teach us how we can be mindful of every single activity we undertake during the day. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* this is described in great detail. During meditation (*ānāpānasati* or breath meditation, walking meditation or meditation on the rise and fall of the abdomen), we are taught to be mindful with regard to each detail. In the case of *ānāpānasati* after a while when the in/out-breath begins to feel indistinct and even ‘disappear’, and the yogi may feel as if he has fallen in a deep abyss and may react with fear and uncertainty. On certain occasions the mind that

had been focused on the breath suddenly starts pursuing thoughts and the yogi gets startled when he discovers this. All these natural occurrences during meditation are indicative of the impermanent nature (*anicca* characteristic) of *sati*.

Pamāde nakampatēti sati balam - This is Venerable Sāriputta's teaching which says, that however much we try to practise mindfulness, we should realize that it will not always be possible. Therefore, this will also give us suffering and we will then realize that we have no control over having *sati* always. Once again, when this happens if the yogi remains equanimous and undisturbed, then *sati* will evolve into *bala*, and we will be able to withstand the illusions created by *viññāna*. It is essential for every practitioner of *vipassanā* to understand these stages in one's own practice.

The same applies to concentration (*samādhi*). There are times during meditation that *samādhi* will be exceptionally good and similarly there will be times when it falls to very low levels. This is when the yogi must be fully prepared and know that *samādhi* is also subject to *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. In the case of wisdom (*paññā*), it will be the same and during certain stages in meditation we will not be aware of time-space boundaries and we may feel completely lost. Although we consider *paññā* in very high esteem we will soon realize that that too is subject to change.

Therefore the skilful yogi will not be distressed when these changes occur in any of the spiritual faculties. He will know that this is inevitable and that such changes will always occur. I also wish to state that if one's *sati* is strong and if it can be maintained during any one of the fluctuations of the spiritual faculties, it could reinforce equanimity (*upekkhā*) and help the yogi to maintain a balance during meditation. The most difficult task is, for *sati* to realize the

lack of *sati*. When the mind is focused on the primary object of meditation (e.g in/out-breath) after a while the mind may leave the breath and pursue a thought. This is extremely common and may occur due to the yogi's personality traits, likes and dislikes, his influxes or taints (*āśava*) or dormant defilements (*anusaya*) or *sankhāras* or any other reason. But after a while the mind returns to the breath and we never know what 'force' made the mind revert to the original object of meditation. It happens with no special thought or initiative taken by the yogi. We should learn to appreciate when this happens, because this means that *sati* has returned. Instead, *viññāna* will convince us that this occurrence is an indication that meditation was not proceeding smoothly. This is because *viññāna* always operates through a notion of permanency (*nicca saññā*) , happiness (*sukha saññā*) and self (*atta saññā*), and therefore the loss of *sati* is viewed as calamitous. But the yogi should have a mature mind to realize that this is not so and that this is an indication that *sati* has developed into being a *sati balaya*. This further shows the deceptive and illusory nature of *viññāna*.

This common experience during meditation is a key to understanding that within every discontent or frustration, there will be an opportunity to understand the first Noble Truth of suffering. Therefore, I urge you to welcome all disturbances (e.g sounds, thoughts, pains) that we meet during meditation, because it is only through understanding such instances that we will realize the transformation of *sati* into *sati balaya*. This same experience can be applied to all five spiritual faculties. All of these are subject to cause and effect, and therefore these will change and will result in *dukkha*. Therefore, understanding the inevitable transformation of all the spiritual faculties from 'indriya' to 'bala' stage is critical to understanding the value of *upekkha*. The

Buddha says in the Dhammapada that loss of *saddhā* is a trait that even an *arahant* would experience and that we needn't be perturbed when we experience spells with no *saddhā*. Although this is maybe difficult to understand for a novice yogi, once he masters the technique described he becomes strong and self-reliant in everyday life as well.

In our journey towards realization of the dhamma we will necessarily need to go through the conventional norms. But once the teachings of the Buddha on *tathatāva*, *tādibhāva* (equipoise, equanimity, mental balance) are reached the yogi will find no need for *saddhā* or any of the spiritual faculties. This supreme quality of equanimity is where the practitioner will not be swayed by excess or deficiency, he puts an end to partiality and bias, and will remain in the perfect middle with a balanced state of mind. The state of mind experienced by an *arahant*.

During meditation when the in/out-breath calms down we face a stage where we cannot identify any sign – an empty space. This is distinctly uncomfortable and we feel restless. Generally we are comfortable to be connected to the six senses – that is a state of consciousness which is linked to the sense pleasures – i.e., *rūpa dhātu rāga vinibaddha viññāna*. Animals too enjoy this same form of pleasurable existence. But when we enter deep stages of meditation after the breath calms down, when the hindrances are not disturbing us, we become disconnected from the senses temporally. Then we enjoy a different kind of pleasure – *viveka ja pīti sukha* – pleasure born out of seclusion, free from hindrances, a pleasure that is not dependant on sense objects (*nirāmisā sukha*)- a very different type of pleasure to that which is carnal or 'beastly'. When the meditator experiences such a stage he deals a significant blow to the *viññāna* because it loses its base and stability. If

at this stage a *cetanā* (volition) or *pracalpanā* (proliferative thoughts and planning) or *anusaya* (latencies/dormant defilements) become manifest, the *viññāna* will use those as nourishment to re-establish itself (i.e. *Paṭitthiṭṭa viññāna*, a state of consciousness which is nourished by and based on *cetanā*, *pracalpanā*, *anusaya*).

If during such a pure stage when the yogi is free from *kāma rāga* and *rūpa rāga* the challenge is to not do or not will anything. If the yogi gets an idea to contemplate on *an-icca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* or to contemplate on the impurities on the body (*asubha bhāvana*) or to engage in loving kindness (*metta*) meditation, that is how *cetanā* operate and the *viññāna* will get nourished once again. The Buddha taught us not to be tempted by any of those, and to allow such a pure and undisturbed state to remain for as long as possible. In fact the Buddha goes further and advises us to make a determination to not allow any *cetanā* to manifest. This is not easy, since in our *samsāric* journey we have always been producing *cetanā*. And this is precisely what has always facilitated our rebirth.

Similarly, if certain *pracalpanā* manifest, the yogi may get carried away and feel that he has found answers to all questions or developed telepathic communication with others and such similar feats. This would again nourish *viññāna*. *Anusaya* is the other factor that can nourish *viññāna* and they surface from the dormant state and can dangerously trap the yogi once again. The redeeming fact is that *anusaya kilesa*, if known and if confronted as they appear, will become powerless and will lose potency. After the in/out-breath (*kāyasankhāra*) subsides and when *vedanā*, *saññā* manifest and if the yogi successfully determines to not have *cetanā* and *pracalpanā*, then, it will only be *anusaya kilesa* that will surface, because these have travelled with us dur-

ing our *samsāric* journey and have trapped us in *samsāra* repeatedly. These manifestations can appear as *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* or even *viññāna*. The Buddha's advice is to regard all as 'not mine, not me, not myself', i.e. to disclaim all *anusaya* as soon as they appear. These are all simply creations of the mind, and if we identify with these or claim them we will be hindering the path to *nibbāna*. We should realize that these are all illusory and tricks that the mind (*viññāna*) habitually deceives us with. By disclaiming everything that manifests during this stage we will be gradually harnessing equanimity (*upekkha*). That is extremely important. The gradual development of *upekkha* is only possible through repeated practice and by repeatedly disclaiming all manifestations as described. There is no way that knowledge/study of the *tipitaka* or research and analytical skills will help a yogi during this stage. After the yogi has been successful in disclaiming *cetanā*, *pacalpanā* and *anusaya*, he will then approach a very pure state of mind, free from all impurities and this state of consciousness is referred to as - *apaṭitthiṭṭa viññāna* i.e., *viññāna* which is totally free from all forms of impurities and is not based on anything.

The *viññāna* at this stage in meditation is free of all bindings and is extremely peaceful – *etam santam etam paneetam yadidam upekkha*. In this situation there is no manifestation that *viññāna* is present and therefore this state is also referred to as 'non-manifestive' consciousness (*anidassana viññāna*). Such a pure state of consciousness is similar to that of an *arahant* or the Buddha. This is where there is equanimity towards all formations – *sankhāra upekkha*, i.e. whenever *sankhāra* are created the meditator will promptly disclaim all as, 'not mine, not me, not myself'. We will then realize that all remorseful thoughts of the past or future planning or excitements had been claimed by us,

as ‘mine, me and myself’ and thereby we have consolidated a ‘self’ and self-view . This is due to our own defilements. The ability to successfully disclaim all these depends on our prior readiness, our trained *sati and upekkha*, and respect for the Dhamma.

Everyone makes a large number of mistakes before this realization takes effect. Please remember that having such an experience during even one thought-moment is a huge achievement, because we will be shaking the very foundation of *samsāra* for the first time.

This can bring fear into some, particularly to those who are not practicing the Dhamma (*asappurisa*). However, if the meditator had previously listened to the *saddhamma*, associated with *ariya sangha*, *sappurisa* and *kalyānamitta*, then, when facing *nibbāna* he will not be fearful, but will remain equanimous. And this experience will be not based on any form of *tanha*, *māna*, *ditthi* and will be one which cannot be described or explained. The Buddha will guide the practitioner up to this stage, but does not promise to be a liberator or savior. The Buddha will advise yogis with ‘little dust in their eyes’ on how to gradually relinquish the likes, preferences, personality traits and addictions so that they will be able to approach *anusaya* and then clear the final hurdle. The road to a non-manifestive consciousness - *anidassana viññāna* - is difficult to travel but it is the road to ending *samsāra* and to *nibbāna*.

The Buddha said that all thoughts, intentions and actions we engage in, are always directed at creating some benefit/profit for ourselves. This is due to the *kilesa* we have. The day we learn to distinguish *vijjā* from *avijjā* we will be amazed at how the Buddha understood this Dhamma and taught us. The trickery and illusory nature of *viññāna* is characterized by the duality it presents. The classic situation

of a dream, is again characteristic of how the *viññāna* projects a completely unreal situation. The only way to see the *viññāna* as it really is, is to bring it to a level where it is not based/depended on anything or any sign – i.e. *appaṭitthiṭṭa viññāna*. But to reach such a stage the yogi would need to practise *vipassanā* with great diligence, make many mistakes and would need a mature *sammā ditthi*, *yoniso-manasikāra* and very high level of *sati*.

Always remember the Buddha's advise and choose what is good over bad, and what is better over what is good, i.e. *arati* as opposed to *rati*.

Dhamma Talk 4

Katamoca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo?

Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhārapaccayā viññānam

viññānapaccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam

salāyatanāpaccayā phasso tī tī

Due to our ignorance, whenever we are faced with any situation or object or thought, we will differentiate one from another and thereby choose or select what we prefer – i.e, we create formations = *sankhāra*. Although this is done with a lot of innocence and naiveté, beneath this choosing and differentiation lie our habitual preferences, personality traits, our likes and dislikes. The latter are manifestations of our self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) and underlying defilements, all of which will drag us through the *samsāric* journey. Therefore we should remember that even though these defilements aren't overt and obvious, they operate from beneath and are therefore dangerous. Hence the need to understand this *dhamma* phenomenon and the need to learn how to watch for these hidden defilements and to develop the capability to paralyse and incapacitate them. In order to do so, we should first adopt *sīla sikkha* (this would control the overt defilements - *vītikama kilesa*) and thereafter undertake *samādhī sikkha* (which would suppress the five hindrances – *pañca nīvarana*) . It is only then that we would have the ability to watch out for these underlying, dangerous and dormant defilements – *anusaya kilesa*.

Daily, we engage in 'choosing' and 'dividing' (i.e. making judgments about good vs bad, right vs wrong, just vs unjust, spiritual vs non-spiritual etc). This duality nourishes *viññāna*, and because of this lopsided choosing *viññāna* is

always imbalanced and imperfect. But *viññāna* is not aware of this and therefore pretends and creates an illusion that it is all-perfect. It is completely unaware that it is entirely nourished by the *sankhāra* that we accumulate continuously. Because *viññāna* always conjures tricks and pretends to be real, when in fact it is not. This is why the Buddha described it as a ‘magician’s trick and an illusion’. *Viññāna* which is depended on *avijjā* for existence and on *sankhāra* for nourishment always suffers from an inferiority complex due to its inability to survive on its own. But it pretends to be all powerful with authority, and always creates duality in our minds – as *nāma-rūpa*, good/bad etc. and ends up dividing and ruling. Therefore if *viññāna* gets established at some point the first indication would be the duality that manifests. This is the case each time our sense organs come into contact with sense impingements – eg, contact between eye and visual object leads to establishing eye-consciousness (*cakkhu viññāna*), and thereby ‘seeing’ and thus eliciting the division into mentality and materiality (*nāma/rūpa*). Hence the critical link in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* chain - *viññānapaccayā nāma-rūpam*. Thus *viññāna* creates an interdependency with *nāma-rūpa* and this peculiar relationship is described as two sticks standing upright supporting each other – if one loses balance and falls the other will follow suit.

This is complicated and deep dhamma which may be difficult to understand. In the *Mahānidāna Sutta (Dīgha Nikāya)* the Buddha Gotama describes how the Bodhisatta Vipassī attained full enlightenment as the Buddha Vipassī. He describes the suffering (*dukkha*) that exists in the world – *jāti dukkha* (suffering of birth), *jarā dukkha* (suffering due to old age), *vyādi dukkha* (suffering due to illness), *marana dukkha* (suffering due to death). Today the world revolves

around trying to eliminate the latter three only, because the suffering in those three situations is obvious. No one has been able to succeed in eliminating *dukkha* that results from *jarā*, *vyādi*, *marana*. Nor did they realize that the root cause of this *dukkha* was birth – *jāti*. The Bodhisatta Vipassī with deep contemplation pronounced that all types of suffering stem from the suffering of birth (*jāti*), and that once born there is no way that anyone can eliminate *jarā*, *vyādi*, *marana*, i.e. they all come as one package with birth. That is an inevitability. This is why the Buddha focused on eliminating *jāti*. The Buddha taught that the *dukkha* resulting from *jāti* is a similar (or even greater) *dukkha* than the *dukkha* resulting from *marana* (death). He then focused on the origin of *jāti* – i.e. *bhava*, and thereon traced the entire series of links described in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* up to the point where *viññāna* occurs due to *nāma-rūpa*, and vice versa – i.e. by contemplation he understood the interdependent relationship between *viññāna* and *nāma-rūpa*. But by using contemplation only, he couldn't proceed beyond that juncture due to the depth and profundity of the *dhamma*. However, after meditating continuously on the causative relationship between *viññāna* and *nāma/rūpa*, the Bodhisatta Vipassī had realized the *dhamma* phenomenon experientially and simultaneously had attained full enlightenment.

This further demonstrates the depth and significance of this particular link in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. But due to the deceptive and illusory nature of *viññāna* it conjures a duality, and creates diversity and conflict and shifts the focus of attention to *nāma-rūpa*. This is similar to how the leader of a gang of thieves would create a diversion and shift the focus of attention to another situation or person, and thereby avert being discovered as the true culprit. There-

fore whenever we experience a situation connected to the sense organs, the resultant effect will always be expressed as a duality (i.e. as *nāma-rūpa*), and this is due to the function of *viññāna*. This is deep *dhamma* but nevertheless let us make an attempt to understand this first at a theoretical and analytical level, and later attempt to understand it at an experiential level.

Let us use walking meditation as an example. When a yogi initially takes each step with mindfulness after a while his mindfulness becomes steady and uninterrupted. At the end of the walking path when the yogi has to turn, he will cease being mindful of the step he takes and will shift the attention to the posture and the turning process. At such a time, there is a tendency for the yogi's mind to get drawn to a sight, sound or smell in the vicinity. The body consciousness (*kāya viññāna*) which until then had been noted each time the feet touched the ground (*kāya prasāda* – the body experiencing the earth element - *pathavi dhātu*), may shift to *cakkhu viññāna* (eye consciousness) or *sota viññāna* (ear consciousness). In that situation he may become a 'seer' or a 'hearer' as opposed to what he originally was – a 'walker/toucher'. Both seeing and touching cannot be experienced at the same given moment. We can only experience one type of consciousness at a given moment and this is the reality we will experience with 'thin slicing of time'. This shifting of consciousness from the body/skin to the eye or any other sense organ does not happen with an intention or a thought of the yogi. It happens naturally. Supposing the yogi goes well prepared knowing that such an interruption of mindfulness can take place and that the attention may shift from the feet and walking, to another object; then he is forewarned and he may be successful in keeping mindfulness intact when he sees an object or hears a sound.

With such preparedness he may be able to simply note only the colour or the figure to which the attention went (without engaging in any further activity such as recognition of the object and thinking about it), and he may be able to instantly revert his attention back to the feet and resume walking with an unbroken *sati*. This is a significant achievement and a sign of progress. Until this stage is reached, each time the yogi's attention shifts from the feet to a sight or sound, the tendency would be to get engaged with that relevant sense object, and consequently feel remorse that the *sati* was broken. This is because the *viññāna* at that point establishes itself in relation to the eye/visual object or ear/sound, and that sense object momentarily becomes the yogi's primary object of meditation, relegating the feet/ground as the secondary object. The yogi is helpless in such a situation since *viññāna* is the sole decision maker. When the continuous movement of the feet touching the ground becomes monotonous the *viññāna* chooses to establish itself wherever another sense object beckons. This demonstrates the predisposition of the *viññāna* towards diversity or *kāmaccanda*, and the latter is responsible for binding us to *samsāra*. The monotony we experience when associating with one object for a long period is a manifestation of this trait. The Buddha taught us to cultivate *ekaggatā* – repeatedly bringing the mind to one object – leading to *samādhi*. He taught the dangers of diversity and *tanhā*, and thereby how it binds us to *samsāra*.

Viññāna paccaya nāma-rūpa = When the yogi who is engaged in walking meditation shifts the attention from the feet to an object that he sees, the *nāma-rūpa* that was at *kāya viññāna/phoṭṭhabba*, in one thought moment (*cittakkhana*) becomes *cakkhu viññāna/rūpa rūpa*. When the attention of the mind shifts to the sight/sound, the attention

that was previously on the feet/ground becomes automatically null and void. Therefore, the establishment of *nāma-rūpa* in every sequential thought moment is entirely decided by *viññāna*. When the *viññāna* becomes established in relation to one sense organ/object (eg, eye/visual object and eye consciousness), for that moment the rest of the five sense organs/objects become irrelevant and cease to manifest. That particular sense object/organ chosen by *viññāna* thus becomes the new focus of attention and the yogi may even get totally distracted from the original primary object of meditation. In fact the yogi may take a long time to realize that the walking meditation has been disrupted and he may become very remorseful with that discovery.

We must be cautious and remember that during every thought moment the *viññāna* has six stations (sense organs/objects) to choose from in order to establish itself. The Buddha warns us that the speed with which the *viññāna* shifts from one sensory engagement to the other, is so rapid that he cannot find a comparable simile to describe it. Venerable Maha Si Sayadaw compares the speed of the *viññāna* to a circle of flames. If in the dark we very rapidly turn a flame several times in a circular motion we would see one continuous circle of fire. But in fact there are a series of discrete balls of fire very close to one another which we fail to see because of the darkness and the speed of the movement of the flame. Similarly we have the impression that all our six sense organs are simultaneously functional at one given moment. We feel quite proud at this ‘multi-tasking’ ability. But this is not the real situation. When we become a ‘seer’ we cease during that moment to be a ‘hearer’ or a ‘toucher’. The *viññāna* will establish itself in only one sensory transaction at a given moment although it poses as though all six are simultaneously established. This is similar

to the spurious 'circle' of fire.

When a yogi becomes accomplished with *sati* and 'thin slicing of time' (eg, during walking meditation), he will be able to experience on his own, this deceptive picture that *viññāna* creates. Therefore it is *viññāna* which will decide which *nāma-rūpa* will be established during each thought moment, and it will always choose a greater opportunity for allowing *tanhā, māna, ditthi*. This is referred to as '*abhāvita hitha/manasa*' – a mind that will promote *tanhā, māna, ditthi*. Thereby without a knowing mind - '*bhāvita hitha/manasa*' -which will be able to understand this, we will be circling in *samsāra* rooted in the circles of *kamma vattha, kilesa vattha, vipāka vattha*. And ironically, we need the support of *viññāna* to understand this situation.

Let us take the instance of sitting meditation. We shut our eyes and intentionally prevent the establishment of *cakkhu viññāna*. Similarly we sit in a place devoid of sounds as far as possible and intentionally prevent the establishment of *sota viññāna*. Smell and taste are almost irrelevant during a sitting meditation session. Therefore the yogi is now able to tell the *viññāna* to only focus on the body (*kāyānupassanā*). Then after a short while the attention will settle on the breath – in/out breath or the rise/fall of the abdomen. Then the *viññāna* will get the signal that the breath (wherever it prominently manifests) is the primary object of meditation. Supposing the yogi had chosen *ānāpānasati* (in/out-breath) as the primary object, after a while the breath will appear fade away and the he will reach a point where that the primary object is not discernible, although the *viññāna, samādhi* and *sati* are intact. Sometimes this is referred to as *animitta samādhi* – a *samādhi* with no apparent sign. The *viññāna* in such a situation begins to lose its hold on the sensory world and feels lost, and therefore

the yogi will feel monotony and boredom, or he may feel sleepy or he may begin to experience doubt and uncertainty. These experiences are due to the hidden defilements we have, and instead of appreciating and consolidating this situation we begin to reject it, or we take a deep breath or we may even stop the meditation session. This again is the manipulation of *viññāna* and its illusory nature. This is why the Buddha called *viññāna* a magician who keeps conjuring tricks of the mind in order to prolong *samsāra*.

The Buddha advises us to appreciate and acknowledge this balanced stage in meditation and he says to know and contemplate the monotony/boredom/restlessness we feel. Furthermore he advises to not take a deep breath or to introduce external signs/objects of meditation and disturb this state. Because the *viññāna* is bereft of its hold on the six senses during this stage the yogi may experience something more subtle beneath the coarser sensory plane. This could manifest as a movement or as a vibration or as some energy. This situation is sans boundaries, personalities, race, gender and appears as one continuous state of emptiness with no variety. *Santati* or *Santāna* (state of continuous flux) is the term that is used for such a situation. *Viññāna* is rendered weak and dysfunctional during this stage and the formation of *nāma-rūpa* is weak and incomplete - *viññāna paccaya nāma-rūpa*. The more the *viññāna* is disconnected from the senses and the deeper it goes towards a place without sensory stimuli and where only vibrations/energies exist, we must learn that this 'place' is indeed where we should aim to get to and stay in. In fact such a 'place' represents the entire world that we are used to living in. These vibrations are of a primordial nature and subject to arising and ceasing, and they have the ability to transform into a sound, smell, pain etc. If we are successful in bearing up

the unpleasantness, fear and monotony and we manage to remain with no reaction, we may end up being able to break the link -*viññāna paccaya nāma-rūpa*.

This is extremely difficult because the *viññāna* will use every available trick and illusion to prevent this from happening. If we fail to remain in this state of uniformity and we re-connect with *nāma-rūpa* we again begin with recognizing duality and differentiation, i.e. we are back to where we started.

A writer from the West has described this state of remaining with these vibrations/energies as 'whole body experience or whole body consciousness'. This state represents all six senses in their primordial form, but they have not yet transformed into a specific sense impingement or a sense organ. Therefore we don't use the mind or any of the six senses to experience this state and in fact it is not possible to describe this particular experience. There is no beginning, middle and end in this state. Within this state is no right or wrong and no me/mine/self. The *viññāna* is in a very primitive state and exists as energies where *nāma-rūpa* have not been expressed. If during this period the *samādhi* gets interrupted by a sound or a pain, immediately the relevant *nāma/rūpa* and *salāyatana* will manifest.

Unfortunately the mind will react by doubting this state and also it will experience monotony and distaste, resulting in the yogi not wanting to remain in such a situation and falling asleep. Our constant connection with the senses is a manifestation of the illusory nature of the *viññāna* and the tricks it plays by conjuring images, sounds etc. In fact this 'world' with which we are connected incessantly is a creation of *viññāna*. It has the sole authority to transform the yogi from being a 'seer' (one who sees sights) to a 'hearer' (one who hears sounds) or to a 'taster' (one who

tastes flavours), and this occurs simply by chance and the hapless yogi is a victim in the hands of the illusion that is created moment to moment. Each time there is connection with sensory inputs *kilesa* (defilements) are activated, whereas the longer we stay with the body experience or whole body consciousness the less defilements we activate.

If we are to apply the particular link in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* - *viññāna paccaya nāma-rūpa*- to our daily meditation, after the breath calms down we should make every effort to remain still, not making any *cetanā* (volitions) or any determinations. Nor should we attempt to contemplate *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* or engage in meditating on the impurities of the body (*asubha bhāvana*) during this period. Instead the yogi should make every effort to stay in this state with no *nimitta* (sign) for as long as possible. Such is a mature and balanced state of mind, and will yield maximum *kusal* by doing nothing and thinking of nothing. This is a state free of *cetanā* and *kamma* formation, and may in fact help extinguish past *kamma*. The yogi will then be swimming upstream and very close to reaching the deeper states of meditative development. In the *Ānāpānasati sutta* this stage is described as *citta patisamvedi assasissāmīti sikkhatī* - *citta patisamvedi passasissāmīti sikkhatī* (the breath has calmed down and is not felt and the *samādhi* is such that the yogi is left only with the mind). This is a very refined state where the *viññāna* has been momentarily paralysed, and the yogi should remain without creating any new thoughts/ideas (*sankhāra*). This is a luminous state of mind where the yogi has the ability to experience *citta sankhāra* (*saññā* and *vedanā*). This pure state of the inner mind is common to every person, good or bad. Therefore we should realize that the external sense-based world is only a tiny fraction of our outer mind as opposed to the

ultra pure inner mind. But because of the constant desire for diversity and variety, and the need to please our senses we tend to avoid this situation not realizing its value. We fail to understand how uplifting a unified mind is, as opposed to one which is tainted by the sense-world and disturbed by the Hindrances.

The day we realize the value and profundity of the emptiness (*suññatā*) we experience in meditation we will then become a *sappurisa* and that that indeed is like *nibbāna*. That realization will take place in a person who has completed *sīla visuddhi* (purification of action and speech), *citta visuddhi* (purification of mind), *ditthi visuddhi* (purification of view) and *kankāvitarana visuddhi* (purification of doubt). Such a person would also have developed the *cetasika adhimokkha* (high degree of faith and spiritual maturity, where the yogi has the determination and clearly knows the Path to take despite many complexities). This could be also described as a mature form of *Saddhā*. *Saddhā* characteristically pulls in all directions but a yogi with *adhimokkha* will have sufficient spiritual strength and wisdom to know exactly which direction to take.

Such a person will also know that worldly knowledge and academic/professional achievements will not be helpful in reaching such a spiritually exalted state. Worldly matters only promote the five hindrances and this is due to our defilements. Using mindfulness as the guide if we reach these states in meditation, without any confusion we will then know when *samādhi* is present and whenever our mind gets discursive.

There was a question about whether we could distinguish the energies/ vibrations we experience during the above mentioned state in meditation, from the tremors we experience as a result of the wind element (*vāyō*

phoṭṭhabbha dhāthu). The wind element is experienced in connection to a sense organ – usually in connection to the body (*kāya prasāda*), whereas the vibrations experienced after the breath calms down is not felt in any particular location but is generalized and is experienced in relation to the entire body. This is a good sign indicating that the *viññāna* is getting paralysed. The Buddha's advise is to reduce *sankhāra* because it is *sankhāra* that leads to the formation of *viññāna*. Therefore when *kāya sankhāra*, *vacī sankhāra* and *citta sankhāra* subside gradually, *viññāna* loses power, and this manifests in the form of monotony and boredom. The Buddha advised us to welcome monotony because it means that we are on the path to *nibbāna*, as opposed to diversity and variety, which means the opposite i.e. we are lengthening *samsāra*. We need to even momentarily sacrifice our likes/dislikes and preferences, our habits and comforts; and stay with a balanced state of mind. This would seem like walking a tight rope when the breath calms down and we are facing discomfiture.

We need to understand both extremes (good and bad) and thereafter let go of both, so that the middle path will be open for exploration. The Buddha said that when a yogi understands sensual pleasures (*āmisa sukha/indriya badda*) as well as pleasure derived from being disconnected to the senses (*nirāmisa sukha/anindriya patibaddha*), then he would have both his eyes open as opposed to only one. He would then realize what an inordinate amount of time he spends seeking the temporary sensual pleasures which amount to almost nothing when compared to what he can experience with spiritual advancement. Unfortunately, whenever we meet this type of spiritual, non-sensual pleasure in meditation the *viññāna* will try every trick to interrupt and break the trend, and as a result we revert to the

inferior sensual pleasures. Therefore we must be well prepared and brave enough to continue the practice, because the *dhamma* will ripen before us some day and we will see *nibbāna* in this life itself. That is the *akālika* nature of the Dhamma.

Dhamma Talk 5

Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhārapaccayā viññānam

viññānapaccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam

salāyatanāpaccayā phasso , phassapaccayā vedanā tī tī

Idapaccayatāva = specific conditionality, the arising of phenomena is dependant on specific conditions.

We have already discussed how, during meditation one can experience *viññāna* leading to *nāma-rūpa* . This is important because traditionally the literature refers to *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as the process where at death *viññāna* leaves the person concerned and that the next *nāma-rūpa* get connected via *patisandhi-viññāna re-link consciences*. The question then arises as to whether we are in a position to experientially realize the sequence of events between the moment of leaving this present life and the beginning of the next life. And as to whether, at the moment of achieving higher spiritual states like stream-entry if this particular explanation can be experienced in practice. Instead, I would like to urge you to try and understand this phenomenon in a more refined context, and to experience the shifting of *viññāna* as and when it happens when one thought-moment (*cittakkhana*) is replaced by another. This occurs moment-to-moment and is more realistic and can be experienced with a high degree of awareness or *sati*.

This is the classical *vipassanā* teaching. The examples we used were walking meditation, when the consciousness which was originally based on the body/foot – *kāya viññāna* rapidly shifts to the eye - *cakkhu viññāna* or ear-sota *viññāna*. When that happens the *nāma-rūpa* that manifested in connection to the foot will next be replaced

by those *nāma-rūpa* relevant to the eye/ear (e.g, sight and sounds). This demonstrates the very rapid shifting of *viññāna*, moment-to-moment, whilst generating the relevant *nāma-rūpa* in its wake. The same thing would happen when we press a button and swiftly change TV channels in accordance with our preferences. In all these transactions it is the mind that takes the lead role or becomes the decision maker. It is according to where the mind wishes to shift its attention that we focus on a sight or a sound. Hence the importance of Buddha's teaching - *manopubbañgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā* (the mind is the fore runner of all mental states, mind is their chief, they are all mind-wrought) - Dhammapada.

During walking meditation for instance, after a while boredom and monotony set in and the yogi gets tempted to shift the attention to a sight or a sound. The *viññāna* which is responsible for this selection will always select an object that will generate one of the following – *tanhā, māna, diṭṭhi*. We can be assured that the selection made by the *viññāna* will never be compatible with the middle path because it will always lead to generating defilements. Therefore, during sitting meditation we should never expect our mind to be continuously focused on the in/out-breath or, during walking meditation we should not expect to have the attention always on the left/right foot. And we should not get distressed when we cannot continuously keep our attention on one object. Because that is the nature of the mind, and we have no control whatsoever about where or when it decides to shift from one object to another. Such is the unpredictable and illusory nature of *viññāna*.

The Buddha advised us to develop sharpened and astute awareness so that we will be able to note the way the mind shifts from object to object. He also advised that

we try and keep the attention on the object of meditation (i.e. breath, feet, abdomen) at least for a while. Sometimes we may succeed in doing so for quite a while. Sometimes we won't. Our determination should be that we catch each successive *cittakkhana* so that we will catch the *viññāna* as it shifts and the resultant *nāma-rūpa*. I often compare this phenomenon to the sky and the appearance of lightning. The moment before lightning strikes there is absolutely no indication whatsoever that lightning is going to strike. It is so sudden and so unpredictable. *Viññāna* demonstrates the same suddenness and unpredictability in regard to which sense-organ/object (and therefore which set of *nāma-rūpa*) it will choose. An uninterrupted stream of *sati* and a mind that will remain unshaken and undisturbed are essential pre-requisites that a yogi should be armed with, if the nature of *viññāna* is to be experienced during meditation.

In our spiritual journey we cannot afford to have a road map or a specific itinerary, because the path is totally out of our control. However, the critical lesson to learn is that each new thought-moment is absolutely pure and free of defilements. Therefore, even if we have an impure thought and a defiled mind-state at one moment, we should be reassured that the immediately succeeding thought-moment can in fact be totally pure and that we have the potential to even experience *nibbāna*.

During walking meditation if after a while the mind shifts from the feet to a visual object (*rūpa ārammana*), the yogi will experience the characteristics of that object (i.e. shape, colour, sign and marks = *uddesa, nimiṭṭi, ākāra, linga*) and until these four are registered the yogi will not actually experience the relevant sight nor remember it. Which means that at least four *cittakkhana* have to be completed before a sight is actually registered. The same applies to a

sound, smell, thought, taste or touch. Supposing the yogi had developed powerful and penetrative *sati* so that while engaged in walking meditation, as soon as the visual object meets the eye, the yogi became aware completely that the mind's attention had shifted to the eye with no gap in his attention, then it is possible that he could keep focusing on the feet and the walking, while maintaining an uninterrupted stream of *sati*. This means that the visual object had not registered in the mind since the yogi's *sati* was strong (*sati balaya*) and uninterrupted. Hence the ability to continue with walking meditation with no break in awareness. Such a yogi will not be able to say what that visual object was, nor recognize it, since he only noted a vague 'sight' and not an object or a person.

If on the other hand, the yogi's attention is caught by a sight/sound, and he sees/hears and recognizes that particular sense object, then the *viññāna* gets established in that particular sensory transaction thus forsaking the feet/walking. This would invariably result in *nāma-rūpa* connected to the sight/sound, and thus lead to *kamma* generation. This is why the Buddha advised us not to take in/register the characteristics of external sense impingements while in walking meditation. Instead, he advised us to first master the walking meditation by contemplating the characteristics peculiar to walking – i.e. the surface hardness, unevenness, wet/dryness, cool/warm. Thus the yogi masters all features unique to walking and the surface, thereby he will be not disturbed by the external sense impingements that may occur and nor have any remorse/regret.

This is the importance of being well prepared prior to commencing meditation. Such a prepared mind is less likely to get diverted to sights/sounds/thoughts when monotony and boredom set in after engaging in walking meditation

for a while. The same principle applies to sitting meditation. Initially we are advised to strongly contemplate in/out-breathing if sounds, thoughts and pains are disturbing. And we are advised to avoid paying attention to sounds, thoughts etc. If not, our attention will be grabbed by the sound or thought and it is likely that our attention will be carried away, even as far the level of the sense-organs and their contact (i.e. *viññānapaccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam salāyatanāpaccayā phasso*). If we had allowed this to proceed then *vedanā* will result and thereafter the consequences will not be favourable.

All of this will take place in an un-trained mind devoid of an uninterrupted stream of *sati* (*vêpulla sati*) . The yogi should train the mind repeatedly so that it will be tamed at least within reason. A sufficiently trained mind can be made to contemplate the chosen object of meditation for a while, and thereafter if the mind chooses to leap to a sound or a sight, the yogi will see that leap with a powerful *sati* and will not be disturbed. He will know that the mind leaps according to our likes/preferences and it is *sankhāra* that facilitates such digressions. But thereafter the yogi will know that the mind reverts to the original object again, and will remain undisturbed. The yogi will not try to stop/prevent the mind moving rapidly in this manner and but he becomes clever at focusing his mind on wherever it chooses to go, i.e. the *sati* has become *sati balaya*, and it is now sufficiently tamed to revert almost instantaneously to the primary object without remorse. This is a great leap forward and demonstrates versatility.

The maturity of the yogi's *sati* and developing the ability to revert to the primary object despite constant digressions to sights, sounds, thoughts are intimately connected to the development of sense-restraint (*indriya samvara*). In

the *Satisampajañña sutta* (MN) the Buddha describes fear and shame (*hiri ottappa*) as the proximate cause for developing *indriya samvara*. The Buddha states that a person who has no fear and shame will never be able to cultivate *indriya samvara*, and that *indriya samvara* is the proximate cause for *sīla*. Fear and shame is determined by a persons socio-cultural upbringing. For instance, a person who has been born and has lived overseas for a long time will have a set of values pertaining to fear and shame, which maybe different to ours.

Therefore *sīla* for such a person may need to be adapted accordingly. The Buddha said that *satisampajañña* plays a critical role in developing fear and shame. One who has cultivated *satisampajañña* will always possess a fear of breaking the law or transgressing societal values and norms, and therefore a person with *sampajañña* (= *paññā* or wisdom) will automatically observe *sīla*.

However, traditionally we are taught that we should observe *sīla* first, and that subsequently *paññā* will develop, i.e. the classical teaching of *sīla, samādhi, paññā*. Yet, repeatedly the Buddha emphasized that *sīla* and *paññā* reinforce each other and that they are inter-dependant, i.e. one cannot develop *paññā* without *sīla* and vice versa. The Buddha also reiterated that such a *sīla* is one that would lead to higher spiritual attainments and not where one is attached irrationally to rites and rituals (= *sīlabbathaparāmasa*).

A yogi with a mature *sati* and *paññā* will therefore understand each time when the mind strays during meditation, our vulnerability and helplessness where we cannot determine the agenda of our consciousness. Therefore such a yogi will re-configure his life so that he will keep *satisampajañña* and *indriya samvara* at the forefront and thereby protect his *sīla* so that it will lead him to greater

spiritual maturity. Such a *vipassanā* yogi will use this maturity when facing the usual problems in daily life and will not heap expectations from his family, friends or the state. He should not also measure or judge others by his 'world-view' on various matters and nor should he try to teach others because such a practise will hinder his own meditative development. One can only set an example and show how *satisampajañña* can be practiced, but we should remember that we cannot give anyone *indriya samvara* or *sīla*. One should never be in haste when treading this Path and those who wish to accelerate the journey or are in a big hurry to see results are experiencing a manifestation of *tanhā*, *māna*, *diṭṭhi*.

This is a journey that is going against the grain and we are swimming upstream, and the *viññāna* is not comfortable to tread this Path that the Buddha taught 2600 years ago. It is used to doing exactly the opposite. Until now the *viññāna* has dictated terms to us and now for the first time we have imposed some conditions. During this period the yogi should be cautious about the daily timetable he adopts, the people he associates with, and he should be listening to the *saddhamma* and be ultra sensitive about the life style he leads. These would become entirely the yogi's responsibility. Because we have always got habitually disturbed by every sensual impingement we will find this upstream journey hard to accomplish, and as a result remorse and regret are common features that we will encounter. The redeeming factor is that this is exactly how the Buddha and all the *arahants* like Venerables Sāriputta and Moggallāna understood this dhamma. They too went through the same difficulties that we experience. When treading this Path, we will realize that within every mistake there is a lesson to learn. With enhanced *sati*, we need to scrutinize every

experience as though we are seeing it using a magnifying glass. Everytime we face sorrow and various disturbances in life, if we shine the torch of *sati* one day we will be successful in transcending the sadness and seeing the dhamma within.

During walking meditation, when lifting, placing and moving the foot; the same phenomenon as when we see a sight or hear a sound occurs. When lifting the foot and placing the sensory transaction is as : *kāya prasada-phoṭṭabbha-kāya viññāna* . The union of these three results is contact – *kāya samphassa* and we know of such contact. With the contact we immediately experience a sensation – *vedanā*- and this sensation could be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Until the point at which sensation is experienced our mind is free of defilements. It is only with the arising of *vedanā* that our minds get defiled. Because every sensation will either yield a craving/attachment/like OR it will result in dislike or ill will. Usually we are not adept at understanding or acknowledging neutral feelings. If a yogi can introduce *sati* at least at the point where contact leads to sensations, at a point before the sensations take over then we are skillful. Because we will then have interrupted the chain. Usually we do not have the practise to do so, and as a result *phassa* leads to *vedanā* and then to *tanhā*, *upādāna* and so on, thus defiling our minds.

Whenever we change positions, or shift from left to right foot during walking or shift our attention to a sight or sound during meditation, if we can practise strong mindfulness (*sati*, *appamāda*) during that process we can then preserve the purity of our mind. Always we should be like a beginner/novice and see these changes with clarity using uninterrupted mindfulness then it is as though we are in the presence of *nibbāna*. Habitually we are used to think-

ing that this is not possible, and this is because our usually defiled mind will not be willing to accept that this is possible. Habitually our mind always reaches out to defiled states and moving towards purity is seen as difficult task and as alien. This is the very trend that should be broken and the only recipe is to sharpen mindfulness day by day, and to make it a habit to apply it to every activity and every sensory transaction as soon as it takes place. This is difficult at the beginning but eventually you will be amazed at how easy it becomes. Whether you apply this dhamma during sitting meditation when the attention shifts from the breath to a sound/pain/thought OR whether you apply it during walking meditation when the attention shifts from the foot to a sight/sound/smell, it is exactly the same. The ability to constantly sharpen the mindfulness to capture this shift in attention as it occurs, is referred to as applying radical/wise attention (*yōniso manasikāra*). This is a powerful experience to cultivate.

The tendency we all have to get engaged and be carried away by every sensory transaction and its attendant emotions, is very natural and it is a *samsāric* addiction. Therefore we should never claim such feelings as me/mine and feel remorse or regret. We should learn to see those tendencies with astute awareness and understand that most of those occur devoid of any control by us. In fact we are helpless and none of us have any control over how emotions take over and run riot, at times. The Buddha taught that these occur without our will and control – *asanskhārikha* or *acetanica* - and thus demonstrated that a 'self' or *ātma* cannot exist. Our suffering exists due to the fact that we claim these as me/mine. The sensations that we experience whenever a sense impingement makes contact with a sense organ, as well as the sense object and the organ are

all subject to cause and effect and is in accordance with the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.

This maybe difficult to comprehend at the beginning of ones practice but once we learn to see things with sharp mindfulness and with thin slicing of time we will know how insubstantial and hollow everything is. The law of cause and effect will operate through many channels – *niyāma dhamma* – *karma niyāma*, *irthu niyāma*, *beeja niyāma*, *citta niyāma*. These have been in existence for long before we were born and they will continue to exist long after we are dead. Therefore claiming every thought, emotion, event in our lives as me/mine and consequently suffering is the natural tendency of an uninstructed worldling – *puthujjana*.

If we train our minds and cultivate *appamāda* so that we can see the beginning of each event, and if we train ourselves to not claim these as mine and be disappointed as a result, then we will be able to watch how the mind shifts from the object during meditation and not be disturbed. A yogi who will disturbed in such a manner would have a strong perception of self – *ātma saññā*.

A yogi who is willing to see this frequent shifting of attention with equanimity and one who cultivates the ability to trace the very beginning of each such shifting develops clarity of mind to see things as they really are. And such a person would have experienced what the Buddha and the noble disciples did. It is only such a trained mind that can protect itself from reactionary thoughts and hidden defilements. At least this can be done a few times initially and subsequently this trend will increase. Our challenge is to increase these spells of non-reactivity because those precious thought-moments will protect the purity of the mind. Each time we react or introduce thoughts we are creating impurities and allowing defilements to flourish. This is the very

thing we should avoid.

The Buddha has repeatedly advised us to refrain from unwholesomeness – ‘*sabba pāpassa akaranam....etam Buddhānusāsanam*’. *Sati* becomes our protection since that is the single tool we can use to watch our mind flitting from object to object, initially with difficulty but gradually gaining momentum so that *sati* matures into *satipatthāna*, and then *indriyasati* and then a powerful *sati balaya*.

Such a *vipassanā samādhi* is more versatile than *sa-matha samādhi* because it enables us to mindfully watch each movement of the mind with no reaction. It would be like focusing a video camera on our mind – the video camera is our *sati*.

Automatically we would apply restraint when we know that our mind is being watched.

Initially, at each sense-door when the relevant *viññāna* results in generation of *nāma-rūpa* we may feel frustrated because it happens without any control. Yet, with a sharpened *sati* when we begin to catch these *nāma-rūpa* as they arise it becomes heartening and we feel encouraged. We will then begin to see the tricks of the mind and its illusory nature. We may then begin to wonder when we will stop getting trapped into these dangerous games the mind plays. We are victims of these thought-moments and each one of us is no different from one another, because all our minds experience the same type of thoughts.

It is only a sharpened mindfulness that can show us this truth and will protect us and will prevent us from generating new *kamma*. They say that when the Buddha walked, he had a sharp mindfulness spread all round and like a radar it captured every sense impingement that made contact from near or far, as soon as it happened. Such was the pro-

tection a well developed *sati* offered.

If we cultivate *sati* then it will protect us. Similarly if we observe *sīla* with a sharpened *sati*, then the *sīla* would protect us. Similarly *samādhī* would protect us. And if we practice *vipassanā* with *sati* it will show us with absolute clarity, how to see things as they really are, and that will be the ultimate protection and the path to wisdom.

Due to our ignorance we habitually select or choose what we like and prefer. This is a very innocent act that we have been doing all our lives. However, beneath this innocence lies the dangerous tendency to establish and reinforce our self-view, conceit and greed, and thereby perpetuate *samsāra*.

Dhamma Talk 6

Katamoca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo?

Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhārapaccayā viññānam

viññānapaccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam

salāyatanāpaccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā

vedanā paccayā tanhā tī tī

The Buddha taught that even though our bodies will become frail and diseased, our minds are able to retain the vitality and alertness. If we are able to watch with as-tute awareness, the five *khandas* – *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra*, *viññāna* – as they arise, or if we are able to see the conditioned nature of these five aggregates, then we will be ‘awake’ and will retain a sharp alertness during the ageing process. The Buddha described this in detail in the *Nalkulamātha Nakulapītha Sutta*. Usually after about the age of forty the body begins to deteriorate and our health begins to suffer. Yet, if we had started meditation early in life and had we cultivated *sati*, then even though disease takes over we will be able to maintain awareness and watch every event it arises with a clear state of mind.

If during meditation we are able to immediately note each time the attention shifts from the primary object to a sound/pain/thought, and if we are able to instantly note each time the attention reverts to the primary object without any regret or remorse, then clarity of mind is manifest. This confirms increasing equanimity and the ability of the meditator to track consciousness – *viññāna* – as and when it chooses one sense organ over another. And this is a point at which we can interrupt this chain of events and disrupt

the perpetuation of *samsāric* cycle. Instead, our folly is that, at such a moment we claim this choice made by the *viññāna* as me, myself or mine, and as a result we get carried away by such sense-engagements. Through our engagement and reactions to such sensory transactions we nourish *viññāna* and perpetuate its existence. We also fail to understand that during each sensory transaction, during that one thought-moment it will always be only one sense organ that will be engaged. We fail to realize that during that process we neglect or render inactive the other sense-stations.

This selective choosing of just one sensory interaction is entirely governed by our own preferences, likes and our greed – *tanhā*. In the *Satipatthāna Sutta* the Buddha attributed this preferential selection due to our greed and craving - *Tatra tatrābhi nandani...seyya tīdam kāma tanhā, bhava tanhā, vibhava tanhā*. In order to know this particular selection and to be thorough about which sense-impingement was chosen at a given point, one has to spend at least a few thought-moments with a relevant sensory engagement. *Sati/appamāda* has to be particularly strong for this understanding to take place successfully, and that is indeed the *vipassanā* teaching.

The nature of the mind is such that the shift from one object to another is extremely swift. Therefore being able to catch it, is by itself a remarkable achievement. When the yogi realizes that it is possible, on his own accord to catch this fickle and unpredictable mind – often likened by the Buddha to a mad monkey who jumps from branch to branch - the yogi develops a lot of confidence and will know for the first time that without any external support and on his own, he is able have control over the mind, albeit it maybe for just a split second. This is a remarkable realization. According to the *saptha visuddhi* method (seven stages of purification),

the yogi would then be free of negative doubts and would have reached the stages of *kankāvitharana visuddhi* or *maggāmagga ñānadassana visuddhi* (stages during which the yogi's doubts in relation to whether he is progressing or regressing and what is the Path or what is not the Path, tend to get cleared). This is a significant development but every yogi will not necessarily experience this.

Even though this freeing of doubt is not a powerful self-confidence as what one would reach at the moment of stream-entry, this is an important hurdle to cross and is a critical milestone in one's meditative path. This is the stage when the yogi will know with certainty, when his *sati* is present or absent, and similarly with *virīya*, *saddhā*, *samādhi*. The yogi by then would have completed seven purifications and would gain some eligibility to understand experientially, the *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It is only such a yogi who would be in a position to catch the very moment that the mind will leap from the object of meditation to a sound/pain/any other sense impingement. An essential pre-requisite for a yogi to cultivate this ability is, that he will not choose or judge the object/sense-impingement to which the mind will leap, i.e, the yogi must invariably cultivate a choiceless awareness with *upekkhā*. If not, and if we measure the object as good/bad, happy/sad then we have not really achieved a purification. It is this 'choosing' or 'judging' that act as a fetter and binds us to *samsāra*.

If we continue to feel distressed each time the mind shifts from the object of your attention to another – and if this is the trend during sitting/walking meditation or when engaged in day-to-day activities, then it means that the yogi's self-confidence is yet to ripen and mature, and that further practice is needed for elimination of doubt. This would also mean that the yogi has not yet cultivated choiceless

awareness and that he still has a judgmental mind set, and that his reactions are determined by his inner hidden defilements like greed, hatred and delusion.

If the yogi reaches a stage where during walking meditation for instance, while noting the foot touching the ground, the attention shifts to a visual-object then the yogi notes the shift from the feet/ground to the visual-object/seeing, i.e. *kāya viññāna* to *cakkhu viññāna* (eye-consciousness). Then simultaneously he can note the *nāma-rūpa* that occur in relation to the visual-object and seeing. If he had noted the eye-consciousness as simply the process of ‘seeing’ and if he is able to only recognize the particular *salāyatana* that was activated (in this case the eye/visual object/seeing), then that yogi has developed a special skill. This type of contemplation helps to recognize how, during a split second the mind shifted from the feet/ground to the eye/visual-object. In fact this is also a powerful method to ‘tame’ this unpredictable and constantly flitting mind.

On the other hand, we may find that we have been completely overpowered by the visual-object and been carried away by the seeing while still engaged in walking meditation. The reasons for this could be simply monotony and boredom with the walking. Then we should be aware and ask ourselves as to whether we are actively ‘looking’ at the object or whether we are passively ‘seeing’ it. Initially it was just ‘seeing’ but subsequently this passive event can be replaced by actively ‘looking’, i.e. active formations – *ce-tana* – would have been introduced. Then the contemplation should be on ‘looking’ ‘looking’ (and not focused on the visual-object or on ‘seeing’ ‘seeing’) because it is now at the stage of *cakkhu viññāna*. Suddenly the yogi may realize that his attention had been taken over by the ‘seeing’ and then he will swiftly return to the walking meditation that he

had been engaged in. This realization could happen seconds or minutes after the attention was taken over by the visual-object.

When the yogi thus reverts the attention to the feet/ground from the visual-object/eye, he should be fully aware of the transition. He should know how his eye-consciousness shifted to body-consciousness. This is difficult but must be practiced by the yogi. When the yogi's meditation practice improves, he will have a natural interest to develop a mature and seasoned *sati*. This is when the yogi will be equipped to watch how the attention moves from one sense-organ to another with absolutely no prior warning. When that happens, instead of experiencing remorse or regret, the yogi should be in a position to contemplate each such shift of attention with complete equanimity. It is only then that we will realize how fickle and unpredictable our mind is and also how vulnerable we are, when we are with all six sense-doors open. This is the reality in daily life.

The ability to observe this unpredictable mind-shift from sense-organ to sense-organ, opens the door to the realization that everything is so ephemeral and subject to transformation. This indeed is the realization of the Buddha's teaching on *anicca*. However, when faced with this situation we have remorse that we can't keep the mind on one object. Therefore we need to understand three teachings in relation to this:

1. This rapid and unpredicted shift of the mind demonstrates that everything is subject to impermanence – *anicca*.
2. This is a very tiring exercise and the mind is fatigued as a result of this continuous movement
3. It is totally beyond our control

When in meditative environment (like attending a Retreat such as this) we will notice that there are many occasions when we can keep the mind on one object. We may also be able to note when the mind shifts from one sense-object to another, and we may begin to feel that we have at least some amount of control. This can happen during a sitting or a walking session. Yet we will realize that we can never totally prevent the mind shifting. If we get distressed due to this stubborn mind and if we blame ourselves, then we are unnecessarily creating problems by claiming ownership to this natural behavior of the mind. The Buddha has taught us to disclaim this shifting mind as ‘not me, not mine, not myself’. Instead of experiencing grief and regret over this natural phenomena, the Buddha taught us to train in meditation by first establishing ourselves in strong *sīla*, and then to suppress the hindrances through *samādhī* and then to face this issue by using a powerful torch to flash the beam of light to wherever the mind shifts. Then the spot-light will always be on the mind, wherever it goes. The torch and the beam of light will be *sati*, thus knowing each and every movement of the mind.

Fortunately, the attention can shift to only one of six stations – eye/seeing, ear/hearing, nose/smelling, tongue/tasting, body/touching, mind/thinking. And a skilful yogi will be able to catch each shift by using the contemplation we referred to earlier. When the attention is on the feet – ‘touching touching or walking walking’ and then when he sees a bird or cat , ‘seeing seeing’. This is an exercise that should be practiced all the time. We should also know and be pleased, that the mind’s attention can only be with one object/sense-organ at a given time, so that we will generate defilements from only that particular station. All other five sense-organs at that given moment are not functional.

This is why the Buddha asked us to practise using *sati* so that we can capture the very thought-moment where the mind shifts from one to another. Capturing the thought-moment alone is a huge protection for us because we would have by then isolated that mind state and thereby prevented the generation of defilements.

In the *Malunkyaputta Sutta* (SN) the Buddha refers to this teaching in depth. Venerable Malunkyaputta was a bhikkhu who was old in years and he asked the Buddha to teach him a suitable object for meditation so that he could practise in seclusion. The Buddha initially asks him why this question is posed, since this topic had been dealt with by the Buddha so many times and meditation instructions had been given to him previously. Then the Buddha asks Venerable Malunkyaputta: 'if there is an object in this world that is not visible to anyone, and no one sees it now and nor will anyone see it in the future, can such an object generate defilements? Similarly – a sound, that was not heard before, nor can be heard now nor will be heard later, can such a sound generate defilements?...and so on'. The answer is 'No'.

The Buddha then said that our mind will generate defilements only from the sense-object/organ that we meet during a given thought-moment. Not the thought-moment before or after. Therefore remorse and regret about the past, or planning and anticipation about the future are a fruitless exercise. It is only the *process* of remorse or planning that will generate defilements and not the events that led to it. Unfortunately today, the stress levels in society are huge and the tensions people have about the problems of the past and those anticipated for the future, are incomparable. People can never be in the present moment, because they would be either analysing the past or preparing for the future.

Therefore, the Buddhas's teaching to Venerable Malunkya-putta is to be totally with the present moment always – be it the breath, the rise and fall of the abdomen, a sound, a smell, a thought or any other sense input. And that too should not be claimed as 'me/mine/myself'. Training in such mindfulness practice would offer the highest form of protection to the yogi. The yogi will then become skilled at knowing the present moment and the relevant *nāma-rūpa* at which the yogi's attention is on, i.e. he will know the sense-organ, and sensory interaction that is taking place during the present moment - *nāma-rūpa paccayā salāyatana*. If the yogi becomes a little more aware he will know that these events are taking place during the present moment totally free of his own will/volition or his control. The events and sensory transactions that take place through our own will are very few in comparison with those that aren't.

The day we decide to disclaim and let go of these interactions we will feel free and unburdened. Our problem is that society will judge such persons as being insensitive and aloof, and therefore this would not be a label that most people would wish for. If we become spiritually mature then we will know when these sensory transactions occur and also when contact leads to feelings - *nāma-rūpa paccayā salāyatana, salāyatana paccayā phassō, phassa paccaya vedanā*. Then we will know whether a pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling, or a neutral feeling was experienced and also whether our feelings generated greed – *vedanā paccayā tanhā*. Such a yogi will gain the ability to dissect the entire process of the sensory transaction with precision, and to discover that this is simply a process that occurs. No advanced or sophisticated instrument in the world would enable us to do this.

The problem is that, when contact with the sense im-

pingement occurs the resultant feeling (*vedanā*) will be followed by either like or dislike, and these will disturb our mind and cause some tension. Thereafter we will not stop with that but will take this further and analyse the reasons for our likes/dislikes and ponder on related matters.

The Buddha taught us to stop with just the ‘seeing’, ‘hearing’, ‘touching’, ‘knowing’, etc. and to not go further with analysis, calculations, regrets and remorse. Our hidden/dormant defilements (*anusaya kilesa*) lead us along this path of mental proliferation (*papanca*) rendering us totally helpless and vulnerable, and eventually we succumb to these dangerous defilements. We should not be distressed because this has been the pattern that has existed always, but the difference is that now we are being trained to watch the process with an objective and equanimous mind. After repeated observation using a fine-tuned *sati*, one day we will be able to watch this process happening at each sense-door as soon as it happens, and see it as though it was happening outside me/mine/myself, i.e, we would have then learnt the art of disclaiming these processes.

Then we would be in a position to capture the moment before the coarser defilements take root - before our feelings generate greed or irritation, and before they are displayed overtly as *vītikama kilesa* or before they become *pariyuṭṭāna kilesa*. That would be a great mile stone in the development of the *sāsana*. Instead, if we keep remembering our failures and if we keep regretting or being remorseful at what we couldn’t do or didn’t achieve, then that would be a grave mistake. We have been taught to begin the practice with what we can easily experience first, and then subsequently move towards deeper levels of teachings. The important lesson is that we must begin the practice, and the rest will fall into place.

Vipassanā practice focuses on initially using the most predominant object as the primary object, and to use that to begin the practice. Thereafter, gradually the work becomes easier than at the beginning.

In the case of *ānāpānasati*, the in/out-breath will eventually become indistinct, and similarly during *sakman*, keeping continuous awareness on the movement of the feet will come very naturally. Then the yogi's task would be to simply allow the *viññāna* to do what it seeks and to only watch, sans any aspirations or volition. But the yogi will soon realize that this 'dedicated awareness' or 'choiceless awake-ness' needs a very much more astute *sati* than when actively contemplating on a meditation object.

The yogi's *sati* needs to be sharp and always very alert to see the tricks the *viññāna* plays. It would almost behave like a spy, and remain hidden and unseen, so that capturing the movement of the *viññāna* will be done surreptitiously. But even when it detects the generation of defilements it will simply watch and note them only. This is the only way we can capture the arising and ceasing of the defilements or *kusal* thoughts. If we watch this scenario with an interventionist mind-set we will never tolerate the arising of hatred, irritation, jealousy or excess greed. We will want to immediately interrupt it arising and thereby escape seeing the natural cessation of such defilements. Similarly we are likely to grasp and get attached to pleasant thoughts, and thereby not see them fade away. We should remember that when it comes to wholesome (*kusal*) thoughts or defilements of the mind, they both behave in a similar manner, in that they will all arise, peak and then fade away.

When the yogi's *sati* matures sufficiently he will then be able to see the arising-peaking-cessation of all five *khandas*, and I would suggest that *vedanā* is the most suitable

place to start this exercise. In the case of *ānāpānasati* observing the arising-peaking-falling of the in and out- breath (*rūpa khanda*) is recommended. Similarly during *sakman*, the lifting-moving-placing of each foot. It is difficult to get used to this but once the yogi develops the skill it becomes easy. Yet, I would recommend that *vedanā* is a challenging and interesting place to start with.

In this context I would like to recommend an excellent sutta in the Samyutta Nikaya, *Vedanā Samyutta – Chulavedalla Sutta*. The Sutta describes a very subtle Question and Answer Dhamma discussion between Arahant Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna and Anagarika Visākha.

Question by Anagarika Visakha: *‘What is the pleasure and pain experienced in a pleasant sensation (sukha vedanā)?’*

Answer by Arahant Bhikkhuni: *‘When the sukha vedanā arises it gives pleasure but when it leaves it causes pain’*

Also, whenever the *sukha vedanā* arises, the *rāga anusaya* (dormant defilement of greed) surfaces alongside. We experience this during meditation when the breath calms down and we become temporally free of the hindrances, then we feel a pleasant sensation. We feel very happy and willingly embrace this happy sensation. Because we are captivated by the *rāga anusaya* at such a time, we are oblivious to the fact that when this pleasant sensation leaves we are going to feel unhappy.

Question by Anagarika Visākha: *‘What is the pleasure and pain experienced in an unpleasant sensation (dukkha vedanā)?’*

Answer by Arahant Bhikkhuni: *‘When the dukkha vedanā arises it causes pain but when it leaves it gives plea-*

sure'

Again, alongside an unpleasant sensation there will be the hidden defilement of irritation or hatred (*patigha anu-saya*). Therefore we eagerly await the disappearance of the unpleasant sensation.

I would also like to refer to another sutta from the Samyutta Nikāya – *Salla Sutta* – where the Buddha asks us to consider being stabbed by a sword (*salla* = pointed object like a sword) and the pain we would experience. He then says to consider that at the same place another incision is made from a similar sharp object and then asks us to reflect on the pain, which then becomes two-fold. This simile shows the first pain as *dukkha vedanā* and the second pain as the anger or irritation (*patigha*) we experience towards that *vedanā*. This is an unbearable experience

The Buddha asks us to see *patigha* as distinct from *dukkha vedanā* that gave rise to it, and to see it fade away. Furthermore he asks us to see these two feelings as two distinct and separate experiences. This is a difficult task, but it can be done, provided we can catch the *patigha* as soon as it arises. For this we need astute awareness, a sharp *sati*. The day we can actually see *dukkha vedanā* and when we can see *patigha* towards it fading away, and we eventually see the beginning, middle and end of the *dukkha vedanā*, that is indeed a tremendous achievement. We will then realize that the reason why we couldn't see the *patigha* towards the *dukkha vedanā* was because we hadn't actually seen the *dukkha vedanā* as it really was i.e., that it had a beginning, middle and end.

At such a stage of realization, the stress and tensions we experience due to physical pain or due to sadness/unhappiness become much more bearable. We will then learn

to see such *dukkha vedanā* as a process and as a *dhamma* phenomenon. We need to learn to see all the incidents in our life in the same way, i.e. that they all have a beginning, middle and end. If we catch these at the beginning and if we can watch these fade away, then the resultant problems and issues would be minimum.

In fact I advise yogis to welcome problems and pain during meditation. Because these pains and problems present unique opportunities to us to observe the first Noble Truth. With advancing *sati*, we should make a pledge before attending each Retreat that we will be able to tolerate pain and discomfort more than we did during the previous occasions.

Question by Anagarika Visākha: *‘What is the pleasure and pain experienced in a neutral sensation (adukkhamasukha vedanā)?’*

Answer by Arahant Bhikkhuni: *‘When the neutral sensation (adukkhamasukha vedanā) arises, if we recognize it there will be pleasure, but if we don’t recognize it there will be pain’*

This is more complicated since the neutral sensation (*adukkhamasukha vedanā*) is difficult to recognize. We usually experience it as a state of monotony and boredom and we will always seek a change, and thereby not allow a chance to recognize its beginning, middle and end. This is the reason why we always distract ourselves by watching TV, making a phone call, having conversations with friends or doing various things when we feel bored. Boredom is indeed *adukkhamasukha vedanā*, but we never watch it or can appreciate its presence. In the *Majjhe Sutta* the Buddha clearly states that the Path to *nibbāna* is through *adukkhamasukha vedanā* – and not through *sukkha* or *dukkha*

vedanā. Yet our ignorance is such that we will never be patient and watch it, because we are too impatient to change the situation since boredom sets in. This is why we will never learn the middle path.

During meditation whenever we experience a sense impingement at each sense-door, if we can watch the impact as it occurs, and if we can see the *sukkha* and watch for the *rāga anusaya* in its wake, and similarly the *dukkha* and the *patigha anusaya*, then we will be ready to see the *adukkhamasukha vedanā* which falls into neither of those categories. This is the most unique feature of *vipassanā* meditation. When during breath meditation, when the in and out-breath become indistinct and not obvious, we will experience a stage where we will have *sati* and *samādhi*, but not feel the breath sensation as we did before. Such an 'eventless' state maybe experienced as a neutral sensation. Usually we would feel quite bored and uneasy at that point and we may take a few deep breaths or breathe faster. This is when we don't allow *adukkhamasukha vedanā* to set in and instead we opt for an eventful situation. The Buddha advises us to stay in that neutral situation and to watch what happens, instead of falling asleep or walking away. It is only then that we will experience pleasure.

This is why the *arahant bhikkhuni* replies saying that knowing *adukkhamasukha* will eventually bring pleasure, and that not knowing it will bring pain. The yogi who does not know will constantly have doubt as to whether the meditation is progressing or not. This is how we sacrifice the middle path that leads to *nibbāna*. I am confident that during our daily lives we experience this neutral sensation at least 85% of the time, but we don't realise it. Because each time it raises its head we feel bored and we engage in a multitude of activities that will mask it. The day we

begin to appreciate this sensation we will understand our meditation practice better, and we will know with certainty when the breath calms down that it is indeed the heralding of *adukkhamasukha vedanā*. We will also know that our defilements lose their potency during that stage, that we can begin to understand *upekkha* and that we are stepping on to the middle path or moving towards *nibbāna*. The primary reason for circling *samsāra* for aeons is our inability to recognize this state.

The character of *adukkhamasukha vedanā* is such that it is not colourful or exciting and it does not undergo transformation, as opposed to *sukha and dukkha vedanā*. It is a state of seclusion and is free of any disturbance. This is something that the *viññāna* will not tolerate and therefore will always suggest a change and will bring the yogi back to square one, where he began. This indeed is the *samsāric* journey. Remaining in a state of *adukkhamasukha vedanā* does not take us in the circuitous route, but instead leads to infinity and to *nibbāna*. But those who constantly seek *kāma* or sense pleasures view this neutral sensation as insipid and they view it with trepidation and fear.

The Buddha taught that, *vedanā paccaya tanhā* is a vulnerable link in the chain that can be broken with diligent effort.

Dhamma Talk 7

Katamoca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo?

Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhārapaccayā viññānam

viññānapaccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam

salāyatanāpaccayā phassa, phassa paccayā vedanā

vedanā paccayā tanhā tī tī

When describing the six sense-doors and the impact of the relevant sense-impingements, the Buddha taught that until *phassa* (contact) takes place we will never be able to understand the mechanism of each sensory transaction, This would be the case even if we had a very sharp *sati*. He referred to this teaching on many occasions and in a variety of Suttas. After contact takes place the resultant *vedanā* will invariably lead to *tanhā* and *tanhā* will eventually lead to *dukkha*. That is an inevitability. Unless the yogi's *sati* is exceptionally sharp and he manages to catch *vedanā* as and when it occurs, the above sequence is to be expected and thereafter in accordance with *kamma vattha*, *kilesa vattha*, *vipāka vattha* the *samsāric* journey will necessarily continue. This brings into focus the powerful message that, *phassa* is the key juncture which will determine the sequence of events that will follow a sense impingement, i.e. it will either perpetuate *samsāra* (as described above) or it will direct the yogi towards realizing *nibbāna*.

We should remember that consequent to *phassa*, we experience *vedanā* from only a fraction of what we came into contact with. This is particularly so in a person with a discursive mind. As Arahant Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna explained in the *Chulavedalla Sutta*, the reason why we aren't

able to see the beginning, middle and end of a *dukkha/sukha vedanā* is either the *patigha/rāga anusaya* that mask and camouflage it. And similarly, why we aren't able to appreciate *adukkhamasukha vedanā* is the *avijjā anusaya* that lies beneath. A seasoned meditator will awaken to this fact and know when *adukkhamasukha vedanā* arises and will be happy, because he will know that this is the route to the middle way and to *nibbāna*. This is possible during formal meditation sessions as well during daily life. But a non-meditator will first, not recognize this valuable sensation and second, he will be exceedingly uncomfortable when faced with this and will experience boredom and monotony. It is such a person who will seek comforts and finds great delight when faced with pleasurable circumstances. But it is also such a person who will weep and wail when faced with sorrow. Although we spend the bulk of our daily lives in neither *sukha* or *dukkha* but in *adukkhamasukha vedanā*, sadly we don't realize this. During sitting meditation when the mind becomes extremely refined we can actually 'touch' this sensation with our mind. But to know this and to experience that sensation our *sati* and *samādhi* have to be exceptional. This will give a significant boost to our spiritual life.

The role of *sati* is therefore to sharpen our ability to experience every touch and every sensation, to the full. If *sati* is weak then we will spend our lives chasing pleasures, always, and will not realize that such a chase will end in suffering without exception. Thus our lives are spent oscillating between pleasure and pain – like a pendulum. Thus we neglect seeing the middle path and fail to understand the spirituality that lies within. If we diligently practice meditation and endeavour to see the beginning, middle and end of every sensation (pleasurable, sorrowful or neutral), then we will experientially realize that if we see every sensation

with a sharpened *sati* we will be guided towards spiritual wisdom (*paññā*); whereas if we neglect to do so, every sensation will lead to *tanhā*.

In Burma, prior to the popularization of Maha Si Sayadaw's meditation teachings, a famous teacher named Mogok Sayadaw taught a practice of meditation which was entirely based on the *paṭiccasamuppāda*. When describing the links of Dependant Origination he taught that the easiest link to break in this chain is *vedanā paccaya tanhā*. He asked yogis to change this link to - *vedanā paccaya paññā*, simply by using a sharp *sati* and by catching the *vedanā* as it arises so that the yogi can see its beginning, middle and end. Thereby we will fully train our minds to watch and prevent the surfacing of *rāga*, *patigha* and *avijjā anusaya*, which would invariably surface had our *sati* been not strong. We will then reach a stage where we will be able to face *sukha* and *dukkha* as the same, with an equanimous mind set. At such a stage of realization we will be able to describe an average day, an average sitting/walking meditation session with equanimity, with no reference to either pleasure or pain – but with an awareness of the neutral sensation. For this, a high degree of preparedness is essential.

This meditative experience on *vedanā* is very special and the Buddha asked us to cultivate it with repeated practice. We will then understand, that when we regularly oscillate between the extremes of pleasure and pain, we always do so whilst passing the mid-point, i.e, the neutral sensation. You will not notice this, but we also pause for a very brief moment at the mid-point before swinging to either extreme – exactly like how a pendulum swings in an old fashioned grandfather clock. If we watch a grandfather clock with a set of weak batteries, we will notice that when the batteries eventually wear out, the pendulum will stop at

the midpoint – and this point is our simile for *adukkhamasukha vedanā*.

Often we ask the question:

Why is it that *vedanā* is always followed by *tanhā*, even though the *vedanā* is a *dukkha vedanā*?

If we experience a pleasant sensation then as described, the *rāga anusaya* invariably follows unless we are exceedingly watchful. Similarly when experiencing an unpleasant sensation the *patigha anusaya* raises its head. But this hatred/anger takes place only because we have a hidden desire for something else. For instance, when we feel irritated when seeing something we dislike, the irritation arises because we hadn't seen what we liked to see, thus showing a *tanhā* beneath. And we will never experience such an irritation unless we have a hidden desire (*rāga*) for something else. This is how we fail to appreciate the present moment or we dislike and reject the present moment, in favour of anticipating and wanting something more favourable in the future. Consequently, the hopes and aspirations we have for the future will always hide and camouflage the dislike we have for the present moment. This is how the truth of discontent with the present moment is intentionally suppressed and not looked at.

This forms the basis of describing *kāma tanhā*, *bhava tanhā* and *vibhava tanhā*. *Kāma tanhā/rāga* = the desire to please the six senses.

Kāma guna = visual objects, sounds, flavours, odours, touch, thoughts/ideas

Bhava tanhā/rāga = the desire to perpetuate the pleasures derived from the senses well beyond the present moment, and the accompanying desire to enable those near

and dear, to experience the same sense pleasures. This is an extension and overflow of one's own *kāma tanhā* to expansive proportions. Such a person would be sacrificing the present moment and the contentment within, to something bigger and beyond. When this desire cannot be fulfilled in accordance with the expectations, there is an irritation or hatred in the mind of such a person. This can be a very destructive emotion leading to depression and even suicide. This is described as ***vibhava tanhā***, and is classically seen in the mind set of the so-called guardian angels of 'Sinhala Buddhism'. They will criticize and even unleash violence on those whom they feel will not 'protect' Buddhism and will even neglect their own spiritual development in favour of such a cause.

This is how, even when we experience a *dukkha vedana*, the result is *tanhā* because the *patigha* that is generated in response to *dukkha* is always due to *tanhā* for something better, which lies hidden beneath. The manner in which *tanhā* can instantly switch to *patigha* (as is the case when *kāma tanhā* eventually ends up as *vibhava tanhā*) is beyond comprehension by even a logical mind. And this indeed is the Buddha's teaching, that the root cause of all suffering is *tanhā*. It takes a lot of understanding to realize this switch from *tanhā* to *patigha*, and we may never see it in others. Similarly the switch from compassion (*karuna*) to *patigha*, and the switch from *metta* to *rāga*. Hence the importance of understanding these emotions carefully, particularly when practicing these types of meditation (e.g *metta* meditation).

With a well developed *sati* the yogi will be equipped to see *vedanā* - its beginning, middle and end - and to see the mechanism that operates beneath. Such a yogi will be equipped to transcend *vedanā* and subsequently, instead of

taking the traditional path- *vedanā paccaya tanhā* - he will be able to reach *vedanā paccaya paññā*. This is a critical link in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* that can be severed, provided the yogi has an advanced *sati* so that in transcending *vedanā* he will be able to see the beginning, middle and end of *tanhā*. This is a key teaching in the *vipassanā* practice. And seeing the end of *tanhā* would be a key factor in eliminating the cause of *dukkha*.

I would like to highlight the importance of *tanhā* in relation to the four nutriments that perpetuate the *samsāric* journey. All four nutrients have *tanhā* as the proximate cause. This does not operate overtly, but *tanhā* feeds and nourishes these *samsāric* nutriments in a subtle and surreptitious manner. They are:

Kabalinkāra āhāra = edible food

Phassa āhāra = contact

Mano- sañcetanā āhāra = mental volition

Viññāna āhāra = consciousness

Kabalinkāra āhāra - The greed for edible food and the consequences of eating without any control over what or how much we eat, have been described by the Buddha in great detail. This is why meditating yogis are recommended two meals only and similarly monastics take only one/two meals a day. Greed for food is an impediment for a meditative life and will result in accumulating *kilesa*. The Buddha's teaching is that we should reflect on why we take food and this is incorporated into the monks' disciplinary code. The reflection should be that we take food to quell our hunger and to only maintain the body; and to not promote beauty or to attract others, nor as an aphrodisiac. To be satisfied with the food that is offered during *piṇḍapāth*, to not be un-

happy if no offerings were made, and also to not measure or judge any other monk on how he utilizes the *piṇḍapāṭh* offerings. The teachings on alms food have been given in great detail, and as appropriate to monks observing *sāmaṇera sīla* and *bhikkhus* observing *upasampadā sīla*. All of this was given as advice so as to not allow generation of *kilesa*.

The Buddha taught all yogis and monks/nuns to eat mindfully and to take each mouthful, slowly and silently. Maha Si Sayadaw taught that monks and yogis should reflect on the four elements that comprise all edible food. Furthermore he said to reflect that the body too is made up of four elements, and that eating is simply a combination four elements meeting one another, and that there is no person/self involved, but that it is only a process only. Venerable *Sāriputta* advised that when eating, to always stop before the stomach becomes full and to drink water in order fill the space in the stomach.

In the *Lathupikopama Sutta* it is indicated that it is the night meal that generates the most amount of *kāma* and that refraining from dinner will aid the observance of a *brahmacariya* (celibate and holy) life style. This is a practice that even lay yogis can adopt together with a *brahmacariya* life style, and such a practice will be helpful in furthering a meditative lifestyle.

The Buddha's teachings on partaking edible food emphasized on the curtailment of greed and over indulgence, and not on issues like the merits or demerits of eating animal flesh or controversies connected to vegetarianism. The offering of a meal to a monastic who lives on alms food, or even the thought of making such an offering yields much merit. Such is the importance the concept of *dāna* and giving others, i.e. of letting go.

If we take the example of breath meditation, practitioners will know that after the breath calms down and our mind is in a settled state, we will be either rewarded with a pleasant mental state – *sōmanassa*, or *pīti* (rapture) or *sukha* (joy). Or the opposite can happen during breath meditation – we may experience severe pain or unpleasant sensations. These may be with volition (*cetanā*) or without. The Buddha teaches us to disclaim and let go of either type of sensation, pleasurable or painful, with a mind set of giving – *cāga*, relinquishment – *patinissagga*, being free – *mutthi*, with no attachment – *anālayo*.

This is the identical mindset that we need to adopt with regards to other forms of *āhāra* – like contact (*phassa*), mental volition (*manō sancetanā* – *sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). These all appear during deeper stages of meditation and disturbs the yogi. The yogi may be presented with plans, projects, ideas and new innovations. These are very encouraging and seem praise worthy, but they should be disclaimed as not me/mine/self, because if not, defilements are generated, and *samsāra* is lengthened.

The Buddha taught nine types of contemplative thoughts (*vitakka*) that may appear at this stage in meditation :

Kāma vitakka, *vyāpāda vitakka*, *vihimsā vitakka* = these three types are directly connected to *kilesa* and may even lead to the yogi creating overt transgressions like breaking *sīla* – precepts.

The other six types of thoughts that appear when the yogi gets deeper into meditation. They are more tricky, cunning and surreptitious in that they appear very sensible and that they will generate goodness. But, we are warned that if we encourage and indulge in these they have a huge potential to worsen *tanhā*, *diṭṭhi*, *māna* of the yogi.

The other six are:

Gnāthi vitakka = wanting to share the yogi's meditative experiences and teach those near and dear. This results in sacrificing the present moment awareness. The yogi will never be able to realize that the yogi is in fact nourishing his own *tanhā, diṭṭhi, māna*.

Janapada vitakka = a compulsive need to access information and news regards the society and the world. This seems very innocent but it is a very distracting thought that can take away the yogi's focus of attention and being in the present moment.

Parānaudayatha patisamyutta vitakka = an irrational compassion for others and wanting to help them to seek liberation, even though one's own journey on the Path is yet incomplete. Often such a yogi will consider that the teacher is offering insensitive advise and is lacking in compassion. Such a yogi will also be distracted from the present moment, and get wrapped in those humanitarian thoughts and once again could get lured through *tanhā, diṭṭhi, māna*.

Amara vitakka = The yogi begins to generate thoughts about his health and well being, determining to take adequate exercise or yoga, and will take dietary precautions, so that he will maintain good health. He pledges to not die and keeps pondering over these irrelevant thoughts, thus sacrificing the present moment and again, increasing *tanhā, diṭṭhi, māna*.

Lābasathkāra patisamyutta vitakka = The yogi thrives on praise, assets and self aggrandizement. He pretends he doesn't need or enjoy such benefits, but actually does and keeps contemplating on these. Once again the yogi will sacrifice the present moment and get lured by *tanhā, diṭṭhi, māna*.

Anavamutthipatisanyuktha vitakka thought of being pure and not making the same mistakes of the past.

Yogis or their teachers who get swayed by accolades and praise often do not practice meditation for the purpose of reaching *nibbāna*. It is sometimes done purely to satisfy a mundane objective, which will once again trap that person into the *kāma lōka*.

These types of ‘thought-conceptions’ (*vitakka*) surface after the breath settles and the yogi passes the stage of *kāyānupassanā*, and after *vedanā* have been tolerated and transgressed to a degree, and the yogi with full awareness meets the *upakkilesa* connected to *saññā* – which manifest as perceptions/memories of the past or anticipations of the future, and the ability to read minds and communicate perfectly with others. He is now facing *citta sankhāra* .

Manosancetanā āhāra are both deadly and deceptive. These seem exceptionally noble and praiseworthy. No one will contest this view. Unfortunately, the yogis who get trapped into these situations are actually the ones with most merit and most ‘successful’ in their practice. These yogis who have great potential unfortunately succumb to the temptations offered by praise and assets, and often meet with a disastrous end. This is why it is important to protect ones’ humility and simplicity especially when treading this Path. Association with a wise teacher is essential to be able to understand and realize these traps that *māra* lays out for the yogi.

Therefore at this stage one must continue to meditate with no aspirations. The *Brahmas* and *devas* venerate those who meditate for no apparent reason, sans all desires and expectations.

When a yogi moves ahead and reaches a stage where he

develops equanimity - *upekkhā* - to all *sankhāra* or engages in *paṭivipassanā* he will probably not know whether he is actually meditating or whether it is happening automatically. Such a yogi will have no expectations whatsoever.

Viññāna āhāra – is when we get a thought/idea, we immediately evaluate and judge if it is good/bad, correct/incorrect and create similar divisions in our mind. Therefore we must not embrace the Dhamma with attachment, because it will also generate *tanhā*, *diṭṭhi*, *māna*. The Dhamma is purely a raft which will help us cross the river to the far shore. The day we reach a stage where we allow the meditation to proceed on its own with no sign or object (*nimitta*) and with no external interference, and if we seem to be not defined by time/space, then *viññāna* will cease to be a nutrient (*āhāra*) for the *samsāric* journey. But this is a stage where loneliness and monotony set in, and therefore we need to be fully awake and aware of this state. We would then be approaching the state of *suññatā* or emptiness, or a state of perfect equanimity – *tathatāvaya*.

As long as we have a judgmental and analytical mind-set, and as long as we keep measuring others and our own selves, we will be nourishing *viññāna* and getting further away from *nibbāna*. And during this process we keep collecting cankers/taints (*āśava*) and keep nourishing the dormant defilements *anusaya*, thus promoting conceit (*māna*). Instead, we must endeavour to be just a human being, humble and simple, and strive with diligence. That is how the *arahants* of the world came to be and their ‘aim’ was simply to be yet another *arahant* amongst the rest – simply to be just another grain of sand in a bed of sand, simply to be another brick in the wall. And such a noble being will have no attachment in any way to a state that he is in.

Such is the nature of these four nutriments, all of which

have *tanhā* as their root cause and which will take us further and further away from *nibbāna*. And the manner in which we encourage and nourish these nutriments, unknowingly at most times, needs to be reflected on. The most dangerous of these being *mano- sañcetanā āhāra* and *viññāna āhāra* . They operate very stealthily and will stalk us as *vipāka* (as a cause and effect phenomenon) either in this life or in another. Yogis should know this at least at a theoretical level initially, and realize that being in the present moment with *sati* for even one thought-moment will protect us from these *samsāric* nutriments. And keeping an uninterrupted stream of *sati* during sitting and walking meditation sessions as well as engaging in day to day activities is indeed the highest *kusal*.

Dhamma Talk 8

Katamoca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo?

Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā, sankhāra-paccayā viññānam

Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rupam, nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanaṃ

Salāyatana-paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā

Vedanā-paccayā tanhā, tanhā paccayā upādānaṃ

Upādāna- paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti

*Jāti-paccayā jarā maraṇam, sōka parideva dukkha dōmanassa
upāyāsāsambhavam tī tī.*

Today's talk will be on *tanhā* and how it propagates attachment and clinging (*upādāna*) and thereafter the other links in this chain of dependant origination as described in the *paṭiccasamuppāda sutta*.

Buddha taught that *tanhā* was the single cause for all forms of suffering. *Tanhā* gives rise to suffering because we chase pleasures due to greed (*tanhā*) expecting that all what we chase behind will give happiness. Then we become disappointed when we realize that all such pleasures are ephemeral and that they eventually lead to suffering – *dukkha*. It is only our ignorance (*avijjā*) that makes us chase pleasures, and therefore ignorance is the ultimate cause of suffering, because it operates from behind and allows us to generate greed which can never be permanently satisfied. This is what brings sorrow eventually, i.e. whilst *avijjā* is the distant cause for all suffering, *tanhā* is the proximate cause. Therefore it is described that although we crave for *sukha*/pleasure, we are actually craving for *dukkha*, and this is due to the depth of our ignorance. This is the crafty and deceptive manner in which *avijjā* manipulates us and drags us through *samsāra*.

In any situation when we are presented with many options, we will choose one. This choice is made due to the *taṇhā* we have for that particular object/person/event/situation. Instead, if we view everything that is presented to us with a mind full of equanimity and if we do not choose, then we will not suffer. In choosing we allow *taṇhā* to do the selection and thereby create an attachment to that particular situation/person and eventually end up with disappointment since that selected item will never yield a permanent happiness. *Dukkha* is invariable when the selected object undergoes transformation. In this equation, *taṇhā* makes the selection due to the manipulator (= *avijjā*) working behind the scenes, and this choosing always consolidates the ‘I-Factor’ and self-view. From the options that were presented to us, the items we did not choose will also undergo transformation but they will never give us *dukkha* simply because we did not choose them with *taṇhā*. The *dukkha* that will follow us in *samsāra* will be generated from the options that we proactively chose. If with patience we cultivate a mind-set to pause, and view each option with equanimity then we may avoid creating more *dukkha* for ourselves.

Furthermore, if we cling to what we chose then *upādāna* follows and that will compound the *dukkha* that will follow. Then it would seem like we have clung to *dukkha*, because the link between *taṇhā* and *upādāna* will be this immediate clinging to the object that we chose. If we can develop our mind to a situation where we stop at the level of *taṇhā* and not allow *upādāna* to follow, then the severity of the *dukkha* to follow will be milder and more bearable. The natural process that occurs is that we choose because of *taṇhā* for that particular object/person/situation, and because we neglect to see all the other options that were before us we promptly begin to cling, thus yielding *upādāna*. Therefore if

equanimity can kick in prior to the choosing, then the yogi maybe able to see everything more objectively and allow saner counsel to prevail, thus protecting him from potential misery.

The Buddha warns that if we don't apply an equanimous mind then the chances for clinging are very high and that the yogi will get entrenched, sunk into the object of his selection, and be addicted to it and claim it as me/mine. The Buddha recommends that we see this process as two components:

1. *taṇhā* leads to *upādāna*.
2. *Upādāna* leads to a *bhava*, and that will generate *jāti*.

If we predictably keep clinging to what is conditioned then we will get identified accordingly, thus consolidating the self-view and lengthening *samsāra*.

Therefore, considering the above two distinct steps by which this process takes place, the Buddha saw two weak points and said: *Sabbhe dhamma nālan abhiviesa* (nothing in this world is worth clinging to). Even if we do choose one object out of many, we should remember not to get addicted to it, because then the hurt will be less. We should remember that any disturbance or destruction related to anything or anybody that we associate with me/mine/myself, will always be followed by sorrow. It will be our children, our families, our assets, our likes and views that will yield sorrow. Anything or anybody disconnected to us will not bring similar sorrow. The greater our likes, loves, attachments to anything/anybody – the greater will be the sorrow when we have to necessarily part from them. Therefore having such preferences and assets without clinging to them and without deep addictions/attachments will spare us from great sorrow.

It is these very personal preferences that increase our *taṇhā, māna, diṭṭhi*, and when these are threatened we get deeply disturbed. If we are able to understand this and gradually eliminate *taṇhā, māna, diṭṭhi* then we would have entered the Path to liberation from suffering and stepped on the middle way. In the *Girimānanda Sutta*, the Buddha advises to identify with the very objects that usually bring us pleasure, with distaste and dispassionately. He warns that we should not get enraptured and addicted to these because they will without doubt, bring sorrow. He says to consider such objects/people/assets that are near and dear to you with the *anabiratha saññā*. If not and if we continue to regard these worldly assets with great passion and addiction then it will be very hard to even consider death as a necessary eventuality. This will bring us enormous sorrow at the moment of disease and death. ‘Letting go’ of such desires and addictions for our assets and preferences at the time our mental and physical faculties are well, is what the Buddha saw as remedy for the invariable *dukkha* that would follow.

Ye loke upāyupādāna cetaso adhiṭṭhānā’bhi

Nive sānusayā te pajāhnāto,

Viramati na upādiyanto

Ayam vuccati Ananda – “sabba loke anabhirata saññā”

‘Abandoning clinging to the world

Abandoning mental prejudices

Abandoning wrong beliefs and wrong determinations

Abandoning latent tendencies concerning this world, by not grasping them, but by giving them up, becomes de-

tached.

This Ānanda, is contemplation of distaste for the whole world'

(Girimānanda sutta – Kuddhaka Nikāya)

The Buddha advises us to face this reality and to actively engage in this reflection and contemplation on what we cling and hold onto. These things we consider as me/mine and are attached to, occur due to our *taṇhā* as well as due to the dormant defilements like *anusaya*. He asks us to do this while we are still young and healthy, and realize that this is where we will be prolonging the *samsāric* journey. Then the sorrow we will face in our old age will be considerably less. This type of self-reflection if done when young, is the best self-diagnosis one can make about one's own likes, preferences and we will come to realize the consequent potential for suffering. This will perhaps be the first time that we will understand who we really are.

However, the mind which is constantly engaged with the six senses will revolt against this type of self discovery, and will hamper such a realization. Therefore we will necessarily have to temporally calm and settle the mind, and disengage from the sense world of *kāma-rāga*, and allow the defilements that are under the carpet to surface. It is then, that all our hidden preferences, our private likes and dislikes, our prejudices and pet ideals, instincts or cherished opinions will get revealed. This is not a pleasant experience, and we may feel ashamed if others are able to see these revelations. We would much rather keep these attachments and prejudices hidden. But on the contrary the Buddha advised that the more we expose and see our inner mind, the more the defilements will lose their virulence and potency. In fact he said that the Dhamma shines at its very best,

when it is constantly exposed. Therefore if we keep *taṇhā*, *upādāna* hidden and not allowed exposure from within the deep crevices of our inner mind, the more they will grow in strength and toxicity.

We need to shine the torch of mindfulness and awareness to be able to see both - the hidden defiled mind states (*kilesa*) as well as the wholesome *kusal* mind states. And when this happens, whilst the *kilesas* will lose their virulence, craftiness and deceptive nature; the *kusal* will shine and glow. A difference between the religion and the dhamma is such that, in the case of the former, *kilesas* are not allowed to surface and manifest. In fact we are taught to keep them hidden, and therefore in our family life, in society and in our work place we carry this basket with us and can never escape from these. This is how we masquerade as 'good' people in society but this is precisely how we consolidate *taṇhā*, *māna*, *diṭṭhi*.

This is why we are advised to see how *vedanā* is followed by *taṇhā*, and to see it as it arises. If we are successful we may see how *taṇhā*, gets transformed instantly to *upādāna* and catch it before that so that deep clinging/attachment does not take place. The Buddha's instructions are to apply vigilant sati at all six sense doors so that we will master the technique of pausing with each sensory transaction, thus not allowing *taṇha* and *upādāna* to develop. Hence the importance of the teaching to Bāhiya: '*...in the seeing, let there be only the seeing..*' (*Udana*)

Habitually we never do this, and instead we ruminate on every sensory impingement that we take a liking or disliking to, and we proliferate thoughts on these sense impingements incessantly. This constant association with such thoughts is a dangerous situation and will lead to *upādāna* and the invariable attachment to that particular bhava. In-

stead, if we mentally associate with noble dhamma like *sati, viriya, saddha* – then we will naturally be ‘attached’ to such mental states. An unprotected mind, one that is not disciplined by *sīla sikkhā, samādhi sikkhā* is constantly exposed to such unwholesome mental states and they will naturally get attracted and attached to defiled mind states and thereby proliferate unwholesome thoughts.

Sati is the critical instrument we can use to expose and capture these events as they occur within the deeper layers of our mind. When the *sati*-torch shines on these mental states (likes, dislikes, tendencies for good or bad) we should simply disclaim all of them as ‘not me, mine, myself’. We should never judge, evaluate or analyse these as they become exposed, nor should we disclaim only the bad thoughts and cherish the good ones. This is where the yogi’s determination has to be strong. If we find that the spiritual faculties appear as strong and vibrant from within the deeper mind, we should not be attached to those and we need to disclaim them. There is a real danger that yogi will cling to such mind states, because that would be the natural tendency. The realization of the danger of such clinging, is likely to occur in advanced stages of *vipassanā* insights like *muccitu-kamyatā-ñāna* where, by using incisive penetration (*balava vipassanā*) the yogi will be fully aware of how the clinging takes place. Here the yogi will experientially understand that whether he clings to what is good or bad, the end result in a lengthening of *samsāra*.

The temptation to claim and cling to what seems ‘noble and good’ as me/mine is very high, but only an experienced and advanced yogi will understand that claiming anything is a binding to *samsāra*. Having a perfectly balanced mind with equanimity is needed to see the dhamma in this manner. The every suffering we go through in life is a result of

the thoughts, plans, people, events, situations and assets that we call me/mine. We live in a cozy balloon never thinking that it can rupture at any given moment thus shattering all our comforts, hopes and dreams. And when it does occur, invariably, we become mental wrecks, unable to cope and deal with the ensuing trauma. The more assets we have and the more attached we are to these cozy comfort zones, the greater the dangers that we will face. The remedy is to cultivate a mind with equanimity and perfect balance, where everything and everyone can be treated the same. This is what the Buddha taught as ideal in the community of *sangha*.

This is not easy to practice with an untrained mind. This is why the best place to begin this exercise is when, during meditation we are able to disengage from the six sense world, calm the mind and suppress the hindrances even temporally, use sharp *supatitthitha sati* and watch the *khandhas* – form, sensations, perceptions and thoughts, likes and dislikes manifest. *Rūpa* (form) may not manifest in its coarse form, but may appear as subtle shadows of sights, sounds, tastes and smells. None of these are real, they appear only to disappear, and we should simply allow that to happen with no claiming as mine, no recognition and no interference. Whilst all this is going on, the need for an equanimous mind is of paramount importance.

The aim is to reach a point of equilibrium such as what the Buddha described in the *Kalahavivāda sutta* .

When asked the question: ‘..at what point could one see through materiality/*rūpa*?’

The answer is : it is when perception reaches a point where it is no longer connected to the senses, a state of mind which cannot actually perceive the touch of the

breath. As though sensory contact has ceased, an awareness of an experience which often cannot be described in words. We will not actually see although there is an apparent seeing, similarly hearing with no sound.

na sannasaññi = there is no real perception of form as that connected to the senses,

na visannasaññi = not collapsed or fainted,

no pi asaññi = not reached the higher immaterial brahma realms, not in perception nor non-perception,

na vibhutasaññi = there is still a perception and life is present

evam samettassa vibhoti rūpam saññānidānā hi papancasankhā = experiencing contact with no arousal of mental proliferation, i.e. perfectly balanced mind

Reaching this point would be like experiencing the *avakāsa dhātu* (space element) via, the four obvious elements – *paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*. Or it would be like transcending *sukha, dukkha vedanā* to reach *adukkhamasukha vedanā*. Like being in a situation with no *cetanā* whatsoever and no manifestation of any form. We cannot actually describe that particular *saññā* that we experience. It is not tangible and this is indeed the middle path and we must not interfere or pollute this moment by introducing anything, or any forms of contemplation. The secret is to preserve this state as it is for as long as possible.

Similarly, when reaching the middle point of all *sankhāra* (where with *sati* we see the nine types of proliferative plans and thoughts = *vitakka*, appearing and disappearing) and the non-duality of *viññāna*, where we cease to judge and differentiate, we need to be detached and remain unperturbed with a balanced mind.

The yogi must aim to stay in such states and to not cling to any of these situations. This is where we don't accumulate new *kamma* and where the existing *kamma* get burnt and extinguished. If the yogi can remain with a strong *sati*, then every emerging new thought-moment (*cittakkhana*) can be known thoroughly. Each *cittakkhana* we experience is totally independent of the next and even if one thought-moment had been defiled, the immediate next one can be completely pure. If a defiled mind state in one thought-moment overflows into the next (the Buddha refers to this as *bhava netṭhi*) then the circuit will go on, and each subsequent thought-moment will keep getting defiled. Whereas, if with a fully trained mind with a sharpened *sati* with catch each thought-moment then the immediate next one can be totally uninfluenced and unpolluted by the previous one – making it completely pure. In that way we will prevent our traits, preferences, defilements seeping into each subsequent thought-moment, and we will be burning and extinguishing defilements as we go on.

This will never happen immediately or with a few sittings. It will take a while and only after the 'package' of defilements we have been carrying with us during *samsāra* gradually get less and less, that this self-discovery will become easier.

A typical such 'package' will include:

upaya = approaches, coming near

upadhi = assets, substratum of existence

upādāna = clinging, attaching

abhinivesa = sink into, get drawn into

āsava = cankers, taints, intoxicants

anusaya = dormant traits, inclinations and proclivities

adhiṭṭhāna= ambitions, plans

During the cleansing process described above, the yogi may experience strange and unconnected mental images, pains, thoughts, feelings and a variety of bizarre manifestations. He must then not attempt to recognize or claim these but simply allow them to go away. They came uninvited and they can go in a similar manner. The mind is sharp at this point and can see how each thought-moment is not getting influenced by the next. The mind can see that there is no seepage or overflow into the next. When each image or thought or feeling appears, it will burst like a bubble and vapourise, and the subsequent new thought-moment will have no trace of the previous one. This is where the yogi is using *paṭi vipassanā* to experience each thought-moment with clarity, knowing that this is a cleansing and healing process. He is actively burning off *kamma* during such periods and will gradually build his immunity and capacity.

This stage is classically described as one where, the yogi's mind is seeing his own mind with acute and sharpened clarity. This is how the *paṭi vipassanā* process has made way for the 'seeing mind' (*ñānaya*) to see every emerging form/feeling/thought/plan (*ñāthaya*), in a balanced state. The yogi's sharpened clarity will now allow him to see himself clearly as though viewing through a powerful imaging process. It would be like subjecting one's self to a powerful CT/MRI scan. This is a significant juncture in the meditative path. The yogi will feel as if he is getting sucked in deeper and deeper into his mind. The yogi's *sati*, *samādhi* are very strong and the dhamma protection during such a process is huge, and the cleansing/healing is very substantial. This is where we stop accumulating *sankhāra* and instead we are relinquishing them.

The essential prerequisites for the yogi to reach and maintain

this stage are: association with *sappurisa* and *kalyānamitta*, listening to *saddhamma*, perfecting *sīla*, *sutamaya* and *cintāmayā ñāna*, and *samādhi* sufficient for this purpose. The key would be to retain a balanced state of mind to every *sankhāra* that will manifest. Then the yogi will become like a rock or vegetation, unperturbed with *upekkhā*; and he will regard everything/everyone as the same. Families, personal assets, his views and opinions will cease to be ‘his’, there will be no personalization and therefore he will have less sorrow and hurt. Such a yogi will avoid getting engaged and involved in projects and new developments, he will protect his mind as far as possible and will eventually have a mind that is equipoised = *thathathāvaya*.

A yogi who reaches the state of *sankhāra upekkhā ñāna* (equanimity towards all formations) and one who has cultivated the practice of *paṭi vipassanā* will have such a mind-state that he will be able remain rock-like when in society, not with a callous indifference or disregard, but with sharp a clarity of mind and with perfect equanimity. Such a yogi will be able to keep seeing his mind at each thought-moment and will develop a strong spiritual maturity. The mind of the yogi, which initially moved away from the two extremes (*sukha* and *dukkha*) and approached the middle path, is now able to go back to those extremes with penetrative clarity, and remain unswayed.

Eventually such a yogi will be successful preventing *upādāna* taking place and therefore prevent creating a new *bhava* and subsequent *jāti* (birth). The traditional and conventional world will however attempt to ‘treat’ the consequences of birth such as old age, sickness and death. The Buddha taught that these were unavoidable inevitabilities after we are born, and that these are the two sides of the same coin. The Buddha’s teaching is focused on preventing birth, by

preventing and arresting the occurrence of *bhava*, and that this is a possibility for every human mind in this life itself.

It is worth reflecting on the Buddha's first utterance - paean of joy (*Udāna* verse) soon after full enlightenment:

Anekajāti samsāram, Sandhāvissam anibbhisam

Gahakāram gavesanto, Dukkhajātī punappunam

Gahakāraka diṭṭho' si, Punageham na kāhasi

Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā, Gahakūtam visaṅkhitam

Visaṅkhāragatam cittam, Taṇhānam khayam ajjhagā

Through many a birth I wandered in samsāra seeking, but not finding the builder of this house. Sorrowful it is to be born again and again. O House-builder! Thou art seen. Thou shalt build no house again. All thy rafters are broken. Thy ridge-pole shattered. My mind has achieved the unconditioned. Achieved is the end of craving. (***Dhammapada – Venerable Narada Thera***).