

SEEING THROUGH

A Guide to Insight Meditation



BHIKKHU K. ÑĀṆANANDA

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**'The Gift of Dhamma
excels all other gifts'**

Printed for free distribution

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PREFACE

Insight meditation paves the way to that penetrative wisdom which delivers the mind from bondage to Saṃsāra. This bondage often baffles the thinker because there is a 'catch' in the tools he has to take up to break it. Percepts are subtly elusive and concepts are tacitly delusive. So the insight worker has to forge his own tools to break this bondage, going the Buddha's Middle Way.

The present sermon, based on a verse from the 'Section on the Wise' in the Dhammapada, might drop some helpful hints for the insight meditator climbing the steep path of meditative attention - alone, apart, untiring. The original sermon in Sinhala was cassetted at the request of Venerable Navagamuve Sugunasāra Thera during my stay at Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya. It touches upon the progressive stages in Insight Meditation and the last four of the 16 steps in Anāpānasati meditation, while drawing upon the implications of the Dhammapada verse.

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Abbreviations

M.N. - Majjhima Nikāya

S.N. - Saṃyutta Nikāya

A.N. - Anguttara Nikāya

P.T.S. - Pali Text Society's Edition

1. Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought. — (1971)

2. Saṃyutta Nikāya-Part II. (An Anthology)-wh.183/185

3. Ideal Solitude-wh.188

4. The Magic of the Mind—(1972)

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5. Towards Calm and Insight.

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'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'*Yesam sambodhi āgesu - sammā cittaṃ subhāvitaṃ*

Ādāna paṇiṇissagge - anupādāya ye ratā

Khīṇāsava jūṭimantā - te loke parinibbutā'

This is the last verse of the 'Section on the Wise' (Pāṇḍita-vagga) in the Dhammapadam. According to the Dhammapadam commentary, this verse, as well as the two preceding ones, were preached by the Buddha at Sāvathī to five hundred visiting monks so that they may attain to the Fruits of the Path (magga-phala) by understanding them. An examination of the key-words of this verse, would reveal some very important facts for our subjects of meditation.

The meaning of this verse, simply stated, would be something like this: 'Yesam, sambodhi āgesu - sammā cittaṃ subhāvitaṃ' - Whose mind is well developed in the Factors of Enlightenment, and moreover 'Ādāna paṇiṇissagge - anupādāya ye ratā' - who delight in taking up and giving up without grasping.

The word-order would be: 'anupādāya ādāna paṇiṇissagge ratā' - not grasping they delight in taking up and giving up. 'anupādāya' means 'not grasping'.

Khīṇāsava jūṭimantā - te loke parinibbutā - those radiant cankerless (or influx-free) ones are extinguished or grown cool in this very world, here and now.

This is the general meaning of the verse. 'Yesam sambodhi āgesu - sammā cittaṃ subhāvitaṃ'. At the very outset, it is mentioned that one's mind has reached a certain developed stage in meditative attention. That is to say, his mind has developed in the Factors of Enlightenment. The seven Factors of Enlightenment are mentioned among the 37 Requisites of Enlightenment as

a certain developed stage in Satipaṭṭhāna meditation. Firstly, the four Foundations of Mindfulness (i.e., the four satipaṭṭhāna) and then the four Right Endeavours (sammappadhāna), and then the four Paths to Success (iddhipāda), and then the five Faculties (pañcaindriya) and the five Powers (pañcabala).

When these are systematically developed, the Factors of Enlightenment are also thereby developed in the meditator. Even in the classification of the Requisites of Enlightenment, the Buddha follows a certain order. There is a certain procedure in enumerating these Requisites of Enlightenment. It does not mean that one has to develop the first category first and then after a time the next category and so on. But still there is a certain order in the development - an ascending order, one may say.

One's mind is well developed in the Factors of Enlightenment when one reaches a stage at which those factors are lined up in a direct order. There is a certain lining up in one's mind. These factors are 'sati' (mindfulness), dhamma-vicaya (investigation of mind-objects), viriya (energy), pīti (joy), passaddhi (calm or tranquillity), samādhi (concentration), and upekkhā (equanimity). These are the seven Factors of Enlightenment.

Out of these seven, the first is sati - mindfulness. In enumerating these seven also, we see a certain order, a system. It is when mindfulness is purified that one comes to see the mind-objects clearly, which is called 'dhammavicaya' or investigation of mind-objects. That is to say, one sees to a certain extent, the mind-objects as they are. Then the mind is awake.

The mind awakens when one sees mind-objects clearly. Thereby one is able to recognize the good and bad, the skilful and the unskilful so that one can do what is necessary with those mental states. That is to say, the skilful ones have to be developed and the unskilful ones have to be abandoned. The knowledge of the means of doing this, is available through 'dhammavicaya' or the investigation of mind-objects and that as we stated earlier, is made available through mindfulness. With the understanding acquired through 'dhammavicaya' one puts forth energy-right endeavour - to develop the skilful and to abandon the unskilful states. This, therefore, is the third

Factor of Enlightenment - the application of energy or 'viriya'. Thus, we have sati, dhamma-vicaya and viriya.

As one puts forth energy, there arises joy, for, it is said: 'āraddhaviṛiyassa uppajjati pīti nīramisā' - To one who has started up effort or energy, there arises a kind of spiritual joy which has nothing to do with the material. Thus one attains a certain amount of joy out of the very fact that one puts forth the right endeavour. The meditator, well knowing that this joy is not the end of his endeavour, subdues it and attains to a calm or tranquillity which is called 'passaddhi'.

Through that calm or tranquillity, which is both physical and mental, he attains to a certain state of bliss which brings in its train, concentration. Once concentration is attained, there is nothing more to struggle for, and so the meditator makes use of equanimity to stabilize his gains. The purpose of equanimity is to preserve the concentration one has attained. Also, this equanimity, as the culmination of the development of these Factors of Enlightenment, i.e., as the last of the seven factors, is nearer wisdom. The word 'sambojjhaṅga' means 'factor of enlightenment' (Sambodhi + aṅga) and when the word 'sambodhi' is taken into consideration, it gives the idea of understanding or knowledge. It does not mean Buddhahood alone, but even arahanthood. So the lining up of these Factors of Enlightenment is for the purpose of understanding or knowledge. The factor that is nearest to understanding is equanimity. It is when one has reached an equanimous state of mind that one can see things as they are. And in order to see things as they are, one has to have concentration or one-pointedness. That also is already mentioned, i.e., 'samādhi'. It is for the attainment of this concentration that the preceding factors beginning with mindfulness are made use of.

When analysed thus, we see that there is a certain system - an order - in the enumeration of these Factors of Enlightenment. There is also another way of analysing them. That is to say, at the very start, one finds it difficult to develop these Factors of Enlightenment as in the case of the five faculties, namely, 'saddhā', 'viriya', 'sati', 'samādhi' and 'paññā' - faith, energy,

1. Sila Sutta, Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta, S.N.V.68 (P.T.S)

However, as one proceeds in Insight Meditation, one comes to reflect that in this mode of attention, there is present a certain illusion - a wrong notion one has been cherishing throughout 'saṃsāra'. That is, the concept of two ends and a middle. When one notes a visual object as 'a form' and an auditory object as 'a sound', there is a kind of bifurcation between the eye and form, the ear and the sound. So thereby one is perpetuating the illusion, the wrong notion, of two ends. Wherever there are the two ends, there is also the middle. In short, this way of mental noting leaves room for a subject-object relationship. There is the meditator on one side, whoever it may be, and there is the object that comes to his mind; and he attends to it as an object, even though he may not go into its details. Now the meditator has to break through this barrier as well. He has to break this bondage. Why?

In the case of 'saññā' or perception, there are the six kinds of percepts - rūpa saññā, sadda-saññā, gandhasaññā, rasa saññā, phoṭṭhabba saññā, dhamma saññā (i.e., the percepts of form, sound, smell, taste, touch and idea). These are the six objects of the senses. The Buddha has compared the aggregate of perception to a mirage. Now, if perception is a mirage, what is 'rūpa-saññā' or a visual percept? That also must be a mirage. What about 'sadda saññā'? What about the auditory percept or what strikes the ear? That too must be a mirage. Though it is not something that one sees with the eye, it has the nature of a mirage.

To take as real what is of a mirage-nature, is a delusion. It is something that leads to a delusion. It is an illusion that leads to a delusion. In order to understand deeply this mirage-nature in sensory perception, there is a need for a more refined way of mental attending. So the meditator, instead of attending to these objects as 'form', 'form' or 'sound', 'sound', moves a step further and notes them as 'seeing' or 'hearing'. Now he attends to these sense-percepts even more briefly, not allowing the mind to go far - as 'seeing-seeing', 'hearing-hearing', 'feeling-feeling', 'thinking-thinking'.

In short, the attempt here, is to escape the net of 'saññā' or perception and to limit oneself to the bare awareness. To stop short just at the awareness. This

is an attempt to escape the net of language, the net of logic and also to be free from the duality of the two ends which involves a middle. Everywhere one is confronted with a subject-object relationship. There is one who grasps and something to be grasped. There is a seer and an object seen. But this way of attending leaves room for delusion.

Now, if perception is a mirage, in order to get at this mirage nature, one has to be content with attending simply as 'seeing, seeing'. One way or the other it is just a seeing or just a hearing. Thereby he stops short at the bare awareness. He stops short at the bare seeing, bare hearing, bare feeling and bare thinking. He does not grant it an object status. He does not cognize it as an object existing in the world. He does not give it a name. The purpose of this method of mental noting or attending, is the eradication of the conceit 'AM', which the meditator has to accomplish so as to attain release.

The conceit 'AM' is 'asmi-māna' - 'only I am'. This existence or 'bhava' is actually a way of measuring. Existence involves measuring. In order to measure, one has to have two pegs and this subject-object relationship fulfills this requirement. There is one who grasps and an object grasped. It is after driving these two pegs 'down-to-earth', so to say, that one starts measuring what is called 'existence' or 'bhava'. So, it is between these two pegs that 'existence' exists.

In order to eradicate or uproot these pegs, one has to do away with this duality or the dichotomy as well as the middle. As already mentioned, wherever there are two ends, there is a middle. The attempt now is to eliminate all these. The meditator who is poised to accomplish this task, is the one referred to in the first two lines of the verse in question.

'Yesaṃ sambodhi āṅesu
sammā cittaṃ subhāvitaṃ'
- 'whose mind is well developed in the Factors of Enlightenment' The next two lines have a deeper significance.
'ādānapaṭinissagge
anupādāya ye ratā'

'who take delight in taking up and giving up, without grasping' 'ādāna' means 'taking up' and 'paṇissagga' means giving-up or relinquishing. So 'ādāna' and 'paṇissagga' make a couple - 'taking up and giving up. But then we have 'anupādāya' also - 'not grasping'.

'Ye anupādāya ādāna paṇissagge ratā' is the word-order. They, who without grasping, delight in taking up and giving up.

Here we have something suggestive of what we said above about the two-ends and the middle. The representatives of the two ends would be 'ādāna' and 'paṇissagga' - 'taking up' and 'giving up'. Between these two we have a holding on or a grasping. The word for holding on or grasping is 'upādāna' and 'upādāya' is its absolute form. Of course we do not have here the word 'upādāya'. Here we have 'anupādāya', the negative - not grasping'. Any way, here are the two-ends and the middle - only, the middle is negated here. The usual order, however, is ādāna-upādāna - paṇissagga, taking up - holding on and giving up. What comes in the middle is upādāna. This is the middle - the holding on or grasping. Now in this context, the most important term seems to be 'anupādāya'. The most significant term is 'not-grasping'. It is because of this not-grasping' that one takes delight only in the taking up and the giving up - 'ādānapaṇissagga'.

In the case of Insight Meditation, there is a possibility of delighting only in taking up and giving up, when there is no grasping in the middle. Where there is no 'upādāna' or grasping, there is only 'ādāna' and 'paṇissagga'. One may note the special significance of the prefix 'upa' in this particular context.

Let us try to understand this with the help of an illustration. Suppose we go to a well. We go to a well for a drink or for a wash or to bring some water. What do we do there?

First, we draw water. Then keeping the bucket near us, we either drink from it or have a wash or may be we pour the water into some vessel to bring it along with us. After all that, if there is still some water left, we throw it

away. This is what we do with the water we draw from the well.

That is, when we want to make use of the water. So the procedure here is: 'ādāna' - we draw water - 'upādāna' - we keep the bucket of water beside us, or hold on to it - and then we throw away whatever is left over - 'paṇissagga'. This is what we normally do when we are making use of the water we draw from a well.

Supposing we want to empty out the well. We want the well emptied. What do we do then? We lower the bucket into the well, draw water and throw it away. We draw water and throw it away. There is only a taking up and a giving up. We do it very speedily. There is no holding on. We need not meddle with the bucket so much. We are not thinking of making any special use of the water. Instead, we are now keen on seeing the well empty. Our purpose is to see the well empty - to see the emptiness of the well.

'Sīṇa bhikkhu imam nāvaṃ
sittā te lahumessati'

'Empty this boat, O monk! Emptied, it will go lightly with you'

This is an advice given by the Buddha in the section on the Monk (Bhikkhuvagga) in the Dhammapada. In keeping with this advice, here too the meditator has to do some emptying. It is this process of emptying that is signified by the lines, 'ādāna paṇissagge-anupādāya ye ratā'.

Now, let us leave aside this illustration and take up another that is more relevant to our meditation subject and has far-reaching implications - Anāpānasati.

Anāpānasati: 'āna' means breathing in; 'apāna' means breathing out. Breathing in and breathing out. This is what we do everyday. We breathe in and out.

Between these two there is something rather imperceptible, something that is overlooked. But that is the very thing which perpetuates saṃsāra. Why do

we breathe in? We breathe in to maintain this existence. That is to maintain craving and ignorance - to perpetuate this saṃsāra. We breathe in to preserve this body from destruction and death. There is grasping or 'upādāna' as an imperceptible gasping for breath. In short there is both 'gasping' as well as grasping. Beneath it lies craving and ignorance. There is supposed to be an 'I' behind this breathing - a breather.

Breath is the most elementary requirement of all beings who are breathers. There is not simply a breathing in. There is a holding on to the breath or a grasping. The effort, here, is to hold on to the breath and to make use of it to do other work. Take, for instance, the case of a person who is going to lift a weight. Why does he draw in a deep breath before lifting the weight? It is to infuse new life into his body. Breathing in means infusing new life into the body.

It is after holding on to the breath that one sets about doing the work one has to do. Within this very grasping lies the ego - 'my ability', 'my strength', 'I can do' and all that sort of thing.

So, one takes in a breath and holds on to it, but he has to let go of it as well. This letting go happens out of sheer necessity - per force. To let go of the breath that way, we call 'breathing out'. We breathe-in with some special purpose in mind - to preserve our life. If it is possible to hold on to the breath for ever, for this purpose, so much the better, but we can't. Since we cannot do it, we have to let go of the breath after a while, whether we like it or not.

So then here too we seem to have a case of 'ādāna' and 'paṭinissaga' - a taking up and a letting-go, at least on the face of it. There is a stage in 'ānāpānasati' at which this insight emerges. If we analyze the last four of the 16 steps in ānāpānasati meditation taught by the Buddha, we can understand to some extent the way of emergence of this insight. These last four have to do with the contemplation of mind-objects - 'dhammānupassanā'.

They are:

Aniccānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati

Aniccānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati

Virāgānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati

Virāgānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati

Nirodhānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati

Nirodhānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati

Paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati

Paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati

Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in, so he trains

Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe out, so he trains

Contemplating detachment, I shall breathe in, so he trains

Contemplating detachment, I shall breathe out, so he trains

Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in, so he trains

Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe out, so he trains

Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe in, so he trains

Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe out, so he trains.

It seems, then that this is a training. What is the purpose of this training? The purpose is to get an insight into impermanence. Here too one can see some order, a gradual procedure. One breathes in seeing impermanence and one breathes out also seeing impermanence. Thus the meditator understands the impermanence of the entire process. For him, this breathing is an object lesson in understanding or gaining an insight into impermanence. This is a training. This meditator is now taking in a breath not for the purpose of keeping himself alive, not for the purpose of continuing in saṃsāra, but just to learn a lesson from it, to develop his insight through it. He is making use of his meditation subject for the purpose of understanding a law of nature -

impermanence. He sees impermanence in the in-breath as well as in the out-breath.

What is this impermanence? Summed up in two words, it is 'udaya' and 'vaya' - arising and passing away. This appears as the first bud from which grows the tree of insight into impermanence. To the extent one's understanding of the process of arising and passing away deepens, to that extent the law of impermanence becomes clear to him. In a meditator who has developed the Factors of Enlightenment and other requisites of satipaṭṭhāna meditation, by the time he reaches the last four stages in the practice of Ānāpānasati, the insight into impermanence is already there to a certain extent. He is well aware of the process of arising and passing away.

As this contemplation of impermanence deepens, as he sees the incessant process of arising and passing away all the more rapidly, the latter aspect, namely the aspect of passing away, becomes more prominent to him. Just as in the case of one trying to look at a mark in a rapidly turning wheel, the meditator becomes more aware of the falling aspect. The rising aspect becomes less prominent. It is the process of passing away, the process of destruction, that is more striking to him now.

This gives rise to detachment and dispassion. One takes in a breath with craving which is on the side of 'arising' - 'samudaya'. In breathing-in, one is dwelling on the arising aspect, breathing-out is the cessation aspect. These are all 'preparations' - saṅkhāras. Craving is the regenerator who is responsible for all these preparations. These preparations are the result of lust, desire or craving.

Now, when the rapid process of destruction and breaking up becomes more prominent, dispassion sets in. One sees this as a trouble. One is repelled by it, not attracted. The result of this dispassion is the weakening of craving, the regenerator - 'taṇhā ponobhavikā'. As craving thins out, the fact of cessation becomes all the more clear, because it is this very craving that has been concealing it all the time.

Why do we say that craving is concealing the fact of cessation? Because

craving is on the side of "arising." As soon as a cessation occurs, craving as the regenerator prompts a re-arising. As the phrase 'taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatrataṭṭhānandini'¹ implies, craving as the regenerator is always out to make for re-becoming. It is accompanied by delight and lust, and it delights now-here-now-there. Because of its very nature of taking delight now here-now there, craving says, 'Don't worry about the breath that is gone, catch hold of another breath. Take hold of another breath'. It tempts and prompts. But when dispassion sets in, this tendency to tempt and prompt becomes less and less. It is reduced, with the result, that the cessation aspect becomes more prominent - and with it, the passing away, the breaking-up, the destruction. That way, one comes to see the cessation of mind-objects also and that is nirodhānupassanā - the contemplation of cessation.

So here too we see some order and sequence. From the contemplation of impermanence to the contemplation of detachment and from the contemplation of detachment to the contemplation of cessation. Now when one sees this process of cessation more clearly, one understands how vain and useless all these attempts are. Even the process of breathing now appears to him as a set of vain attempts. With a deep awareness of this vanity, he now breathes in, simply to breathe out, to let go - 'paṭinissaggānupassī'. This is the contemplation of relinquishment which is the sixteenth and last step in Ānāpānasati meditation.

The insight developed through ānāpānasati reaches its climax here. The phenomenon of breathing has now become an object-lesson in understanding the emptiness and not-self nature of existence. 'Paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmi' - 'Contemplating relinquishment I shall breathe in, even while breathing-in, one is contemplating the idea of giving up. One is not going to grasp it and make use of it. Similarly, 'Paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmi'. Needless to say then, while breathing out too, he is contemplating the idea of giving up. So we can now revert to our simile of the well. Only, in this context, it is not a case of drawing water but a drawing in of breath.

3. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, S.N. V. 421

One draws in a breath just to let go of it. Here is simply a drawing in and a letting go. One has no idea of holding on to the breath, to do something with it. One is simply aware of it as a certain natural phenomenon. There is no 'I' who holds on to the breath. Breathing is simply a natural process connected with this bodily frame.

By now, the meditator has passed through the stages of insight connected with the seeing of breaking-up, fear and peril. With the maturity of these insight knowledges, the meditator is now well poised to let go in order to be free. Breathing, as an illustration of the natural law of arising and passing away, has now contributed to a deepening of insight into the three characteristics, 'anicca' 'dukkha' and 'anattā' - impermanence, suffering and not-self.

Out of the two ends and the middle we earlier spoke about, the middle signified by 'upādāya' (grasping), has disappeared. So we are left with simply the two ends. It is the middle that justifies the discrimination between two ends. Now that the significance of the middle is lost, the two ends also lose their justification. Now the entire process of breathing is understood as a circular process. There is simply a process of breathing in and a breathing out. There is no 'one' that breathes. This, in fact, is the realization of the not-self nature. What has happened is that a disgust or a disenchantment - 'nibbidā' - has been aroused by the insight knowledges relating to destruction, fear and peril (bhāṅga, bhaya, ādinava), with the result craving has lost its sanction. When craving, the regenerator, goes out of action, there is no 'upādāna'. There is no grip to grasp.

So breathing is now understood simply as a bodily preparation (kāyasāṅkhāra), not as an activity impelled and propelled by an 'I'. This way, one reaches a depth of insight that is helpful in doing away with the 'āsava's' or influxes which are the net-result of one's saṁsāric habits. The word 'āsava' connotes both fermentation and intoxication. 'Āsavas' are, therefore, habits and habitual tendencies which we have stored up in the past and which seek now to influence and infiltrate into our everyday life. Deeply ingrained in all these saṁsāric habits, is a tendency to grasp and

hold on. One grasps and holds on to sensuality, to views, to rites and rituals and to the assertion of a self.

All these are modes of habitual grasping. It is the release from this habitual grasping that brings about the extinction of the influxes. The three influxes are, 'kāmasavā', 'bhavāsavā' and 'avijjāsavā', i.e., the influxes relating to sensuality, existence and ignorance. 'Khīṇāsava' is the term for the arahant who has extinguished these influxes. The arahants have reached that state by giving up grasping and that is why we sometimes come across the phrase, 'anupādāya cittassa vimokkho' - 'the mind's release by not grasping'. What it means is the freedom of the mind from the tendency to grasp. So, when upādāna which is in the middle is done away with, the two ends also lose their significance. But all this happens through understanding. That is, the understanding of the two ends and the middle. In short, it boils down to the understanding that the so-called object is merely a mirage. That is to say, what one has so far taken as the object, what one has so far conceived as an object, is, in fact, simply a mirage.

All the delusion in the world is traceable to the illusion that is in perception - 'saññā'. It is because of 'saññā' or perception that knots and grips occur, so much so that one who is free from 'saññā' is free from knots and grips also. That is why it is said in the Māgandiya Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta.

'Saññāvirattassa na santi ganthā
Paññāvimuttassa na santi mohā'

'To one detached from perception there are no knots and to one released through wisdom there are no delusions.'

So the purpose of this training in insight is that release from perception. Until full detachment with regard to perception sets in, knotting will go on. A sort of disgust or disenchantment has to occur for detachment to set in. With the gradual refinement of the mode of mental noting, one is able to eliminate these knots brought about by perception. As mentioned above, one has to stop short at the bare awareness of seeing, hearing, feeling and so

forth. Thereby one does not take seriously those two pegs between which perception occurs. One avoids thinking in terms of subject and object - 'There is that form there, and here am I'; 'There is that sound there, and here am I'. Avoiding that way of thinking, one understands experience simply as a process of seeing and hearing. But there is something far more subtle which leads one towards perception and that is, contact or 'phassa'. The arising of contact is an extremely subtle phenomenon. What is generally understood as contact is the striking together of two things. So, the notion of duality is already implicit there. But this of course is the worldly way of understanding the phenomenon of contact. That is why the Buddha also sometimes gives the illustration of the striking together of two pieces of wood as a simile for the phenomenon of contact. To contact or to strike together there has to be two. The presence of two things is already presupposed.

There is, however, an important sutta in Majjhima Nikāya which gives us a deeper insight into this phenomenon of contact. It is the Madhupindika Sutta. There we read:

'Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānam, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā ...'

'Dependent on eye and forms, there arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is contact, dependent on contact is feeling ...' and so forth. It is the first few words that convey something extremely deep.

'Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānam. Here we have the two words 'paṭicca' and 'uppajjati' which remind us of the term 'paṭiccasamuppāda'. 'Paṭicca' means 'dependent on' or 'because of'. What is implied here is that consciousness is not something existing in itself or by itself. It is not something abstract. It always arises dependent on something or other, because of something or other. 'Paṭicca' conveys the idea of relationship or relativity.

For instance, eye-consciousness is a relationship between the eye, the internal base, and forms, the external base. Here, then, we already have an

instance of 'paṭicca samuppāda' - the law of Dependent Arising. Consciousness has been compared to a conjuror's trick - to a magic show. One has to get an insight into the back-stage workings of this magic show. There are the six dependently arisen consciousnesses with mind-consciousness as the sixth. In the phrase quoted above, the emphasis should be placed on the word 'paṭicca'. 'Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānam. Eye-consciousness arises dependent on eye and form and not independently.

Apparently, here again, we are faced with the question of two things, but then let us take a peep into the backstage workings of consciousness. What is called 'consciousness' is a form of discrimination. In fact, consciousness itself is the very discrimination between an internal base and an external base - eye and forms, ear and sounds and so on.

But the irony of the situation is this: The very discrimination implies the ignoring of the relationship. That is why the birth of consciousness is in itself the birth of ignorance. Given this ignorance, there is the possibility of counting the three factors - eye, forms and eye-consciousness. This, then, is the triad - the three that are coming together to bring about contact.

'Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso'. This is the most basic reckoning - 'phassa paññatti' which implies the counting as a three. This might well appear as an extremely subtle problem for the logician. It is because of eye and forms that eye-consciousness has arisen. But once eye-consciousness has arisen, there is the tendency to forget - to ignore - the relationship and to make a reckoning in which the third factor - the 'tertium-quid' - is that very discrimination, 'eye-consciousness'. In other words, there is an implicit ignorance of the fact that consciousness is dependently-arisen. Once this reckoning of the three as eye, forms, and eye-consciousness is taken seriously, the stage is set for 'contact' - 'tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso'. The coming-together of the three is contact.

In fact it is not simply a coming-together; it is a going-together as well. It is a concurrence. So long as the three go together in ignorance, there is

contact. There is a possibility of a situation called 'contact.' Earlier, we were talking about two things to define 'contact.' But here we seem to have three things. But there is no contradiction. What is meant is that there is an ignorance of the fact that eye-consciousness which forms the third is arisen dependent on the other two.

When eye becomes self conscious, it separates itself from forms, and these are the two ends. With these two ends as pegs, a measuring goes on which we call percepts, concepts and knowledge. But in this so-called knowledge, the duality is already implicit. There is a dichotomy between an 'internal' and an 'external'—between a subject and an object. That is why there is a need for a more refined way of mental-noting in order to get rid of this delusion.

Now let us take the case of a mirage. When a deer sees a mirage at a distance, it does not know. It is ignorant of the fact that it is a mirage. Thirsty as it is, it imagines the mirage to be water. Its vision is biased and unclear. It lacks the wisdom to understand the nature of the phenomenon which we call 'a mirage'. It perceives and conceives water in the mirage. In the language of the deer, the mirage would be called 'water.' Just as in the world people call each other 'man' or 'woman', so the deer would call the mirage 'water.' If we are to take seriously the duality and say: 'the form is out there and I am here, the sound is out there and I am here,' we will be in a similar position. So actually what we have here is just a bit of bare experience. That too comes about by giving recognition to the two ends - the internal base and the external base. By recognizing them, by separating them, by discriminating between them, there arises a certain measuring. So the concept of two things striking together also follows as a matter of course. Given two things, there is a possibility of a contact between them. And this is 'contact' as the world understands it. Given this contact, there arise dependent on it, feeling, perception and all the rest of it. It goes as far as thinking and logic.

Now, this is the delusion. This is the ignorance. What, then, is the insight that helps one to unravel this state of affairs? It is the understanding of the

conditioned nature of consciousness - that consciousness arises dependent on conditions. Even that insight emerges through a refined way of attending. That is, by accelerating the mental noting in such a way as not to get caught in the net of perception or *sāññā*. In other words, to stop short at bare awareness. It is by such a technique that one can get an insight into the back stage workings of consciousness. For instance, the insight that the eye-consciousness arises dependent on eye and forms and that the very discrimination between the two ends is eye-consciousness, which is the middle. This story of the two ends and the middle is beautifully presented in the *Pārāyaṇa Sutta* found in the Section of the Sixes in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. What forms the nucleus of that *sutta* is the following verse quoted from the *Pārāyaṇa Vagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*:

'Yo ubhante viditvāna - majjhe mantā na lippati,
Taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti - so'dha sibbanimaccagā'

This verse preached by the Buddha in reply to a question put by Brahmin Tissa Metteyya, is quoted here for comment. In a sort of a 'seminar' on the significance of this verse, six monks put forward their individual opinions thereby drawing out the deeper implications of the verse in question. The meaning of the verse, as it stands, would be something like this:

'Yo ubhante viditvāna' - He who having understood both ends,
'Majjhe mantā na lippati' - Does not get attached to the middle through wisdom,
'Taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti' - Him I call a great man
'So idha sibbanim accagā' - It is he who has bypassed or escaped the seamstress in this world.

'Sibbanī' or 'seamstress' is a term for craving. The function of craving is conceived here as a process of stitching or weaving. The underlying idea is the accumulation of knots. It is craving that is responsible for the knotty nature of this existence. The two ends and the middle referred to in this verse are just the things necessary for making a knot. The significance of the two ends and the middle has been variously interpreted in this *sutta*. According to one interpretation that came up at this symposium, the one-

end means the six internal bases and the second end means the six external bases and the middle is consciousness. By consciousness is meant the six kinds of sense-consciousness. So according to this interpretation too, we find that consciousness becomes the middle as a result of reckoning the sense and its object as two ends. It is as if two pegs have been driven as eye and forms for the measuring that is implicit in sense-perception. The arising of this basic discrimination is called the arising of the sense-bases, -'āyatanuppāda'. And the insight into this basic discrimination is called the seeing of the arising of sense-bases. In the Sōṇa Sutta, among the Sixes of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, we find the following significant verse:

Taṇhakkhayādhimuttassa
Asammohaṇa cetaso

Disvā āyatanuppādā
Sammā cittāni vimuccati

'In one who is intent upon the destruction of craving and the non-delusion of the mind, on seeing the arising of sense-bases, the mind is well released.

One may well infer from this verse that it is by the not-seeing of the arising of the bases that one remains bound - that the mind remains bound to saṃsāra. As we mentioned above, so long as there is no proper understanding of the two-ends, a middle creeps in. So long as one grasps eye and forms as the two ends, eye-consciousness comes in. That is because what is called eye-consciousness is the very discrimination of eye and form as two things. Now, in the case of the mirage, the deer thinks: 'I am here, the water is out there.' It is with this presumption that the deer runs towards the mirage. But from the very outset, this discrimination, this consciousness of water, is wrong. Therefore the deer keeps on running after the mirage. It is a vain pursuit. The more it approaches the more its object recedes. This is the nature of a mirage. But what impels the deer in its pursuit is its eye-consciousness. This consciousness acts like two pegs. So the deer thinks:

'here is my eye and there is that water. If only I can go there, I can see that real water and drink it.' Similarly, when we grasp eye and forms as the two ends, we have driven the two pegs down to the earth, as it were. We have taken eye and forms as real. That very discrimination is eye-consciousness.

The best revelation of this state of affairs comes when one has accelerated one's speed of mental-noting to such an extent that when a thought comes to one's mind, one summarily dismisses it as a mere thinking without being carried away by it. Thereby one does not allow that thought to crystallize itself as an object. Normally, an object is something that one clings to or hangs on to. The mind which has been in the habit of clinging throughout saṃsāra, always seeks to hang on to something or the other, however frail it may be. That is because of the craving for existence. Just as a man falling down a precipice would hang on even to the frail straw for fear of the fall, the ever-new regenerator, craving - 'taṇhā ponobhavikā' - prompts one to hang on to this that or the other. But the crux of the problem lies where the mind meets its object. Mind has the habit of hanging on to its object. Even when the five external senses do not grasp their respective objects, mind would grasp the thought as its object. One tends to think: 'Here am I, the thinker, and this is my mind-object.' So long as this bifurcation, this duality, is there, there will also be a place for mind-consciousness. In the magic-show of consciousness, mind-consciousness is the subtlest trick of all. Now in the verse quoted above, it is said that the mind is well released on seeing the arising of bases. How does this come about? When the meditator attends to the objects of the six senses rapidly and in a more refined way, without clinging to them, summarily dismissing them, in the course of his meditative attention - all of a sudden - he discovers the mind-object as soon as it strikes the mind. The relativity involved in the process of sense-contact is thereby understood and the delusion regarding the magic-show of consciousness is dispelled. Strange as it may appear, this very insight into the dependent arising of sense bases has dismantled those very sense-bases.

as it were. Of course, the process of cessation was going on all the time. But due to the regenerator, - craving - which had a partiality for the arising aspect, the fact of cessation was not seen. As it is said in Dvayatānupassanā Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta:

'Ye ca rūpāgāhattā

Ye ca arūpāgāhattā

Nirodham appajānā

Āgantāro punabbhavaṃ'

'Those beings who approach realms of form and those that are in formless realms, not understanding well the fact of cessation, come again and again to existence.'

What is meant is that impelled by craving, beings are always keen on ever-new arisings to the neglect of the fact of cessation. As soon as a thing breaks up, craving prompts: "Don't worry about this thing that is lost. Take hold of that thing out there." This renewing process goes on so rapidly in the mind, that the process of mental-noting is something like a battle with Māra. One has to speed up the process of mental-noting in such a way as to eliminate the possibilities of attachment and clinging. In fact, it would be at a totally unexpected moment that the releasing insight breaks forth. But once that insight dawns, one understands for the first time the delusion one has been in, all this time. Consciousness arises dependent on conditions. There is no 'I' in it. This way, one sees the law of Paṭiccasamuppāda with the help of the six sense-bases. This is the significance of the phrase: "Cakkhuṇṇa paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ" quoted above.

Eye-consciousness arises dependent on eye and forms. And likewise, mind-consciousness arises dependent on mind and mind-objects. So long as this fact is not seen, there is a tendency to imagine three things in this situation - 'tinnāṃ saṅgati phasso', 'the concurrence of the three is contact.' This concurrence or the going-together is actually a going-together of the delusion of the three. So this insight may be called the understanding of

contact or the understanding of consciousness or the understanding of perception.

In short, it is the understanding of Paṭiccasamuppāda - the Dependent Arising. Though it is the illusion of the mirage that tempts the deer, what prompts its vain pursuit is a delusion. It is when one understands this delusion concerning the sense-bases that one attains to the influx-free position of the Arahant - the extinction of influxes. The tendency to grasp and cling which leads to grips and knots wears off. That is why it was said: 'Saññāvirattassa na santi ganthā' - 'to one detached from sense-perception there are no knots.' This is the release from 'Saññā' or perception. It was also said: 'paññāvimuttassa na santi mohā' - 'to one released through wisdom, there are no delusions. It is in the light of wisdom that one discovers the secret of consciousness.'

'Viññānaṃ pariññeyyaṃ, paññā bhāvetabbā' - 'consciousness is to be comprehended and wisdom is to be developed.'

It is by the development of wisdom that one comes to understand the true state of affairs with regard to consciousness. It is something like taking a peep into the backstage workings of a magic-show. Wisdom is something penetrative ('nibbedhikā paññā'). In fact, the culmination of all endeavours is the development of wisdom. Wisdom is the crest-gem. 'Paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ' - 'Wisdom is the jewel of mankind.' It is only through wisdom that one can understand the delusion involved in consciousness. In the last analysis, the murk of delusion, the darkness of ignorance, is dispelled only by the radiance of wisdom.

The Buddha has declared that there are four radiances in the world - the radiance of the moon, the radiance of the sun, the radiance of fire and lastly the radiance of wisdom - 'paññāppabhā'. He proclaimed that out of these four, the last, the radiance of wisdom is the highest. It is the highest because

4. Mahāvedalla Sutta, M.N. I 293 (P.T.S)

5. Ajarasa Sutta, S.N. I 36 (P.T.S)

6. Ābhā Sutta, A.N. II 139f (P.T.S)

the darkness of ignorance is dispelled only by it. The influx-free arahant's mind is radiant with that radiance of wisdom. So it is said 'khīṇāsava jūṭimantā'. The fermenting influxes which make for intoxication are destroyed and with the insight into the nature of consciousness through wisdom, his mind is radiant. Now, all this shows that to see 'Paṭiccasamuppāda' is to be free from it. In this Law of Dependent Arising, there are two aspects - arising (samudaya) and cessation (nirodha). Out of these two aspects, if one has seen the arising aspect, then and there, one has already got an insight into the fact of cessation. One understands that whatever is of a nature to arise is also of a nature to cease. 'Yaṃ kiñci samudayaḍhammaṃ, sabbantaṃ nirodhadhammaṃ.'

What prevents this insight is that grasping or 'upādāna'. Generally in the world, very few are keen on emptying the well. The majority simply draw water to make use of it. But there is no end to this making use of the water. Only when one decides upon emptying the well, will one be drawing water just to throw it away without grasping. This is the position of those who are keen on seeing the emptiness of the world, and it is they that are fully appeased in the world. The word 'parinibbutā' in this context does not mean that the arahants have passed away. They live in the world fully appeased, having extinguished the fires of lust, hate and delusion.

The word 'upādāna' has two senses - 'grasping' as well as 'fuel that catches fire'. In fact, the totality of existence is a raging fire kept up by the fuel of 'upādāna'. 'Bhavanirodho nibbanaṃ'. The realization of the cessation of existence is at the same time, the extinction of that raging fire which brings an appeasement. Therefore the Arahants are those that dwell fully appeased in the world, having extinguished those fires.

'Yesāṃ sambodhi aṅgesu - sammā cittaṃ subhāvitāṃ'
 Adānāpaṭinissagge - anupādāya ye ratā
 Khīṇāsava jūṭimantā - te loke parinibbutā'