

**A Discourse on Paticcasamuppada**

**Paticca Samuppada**

**Dependent Origination**

**The Law of Cause  
and Effect**

**By Most Venerable**

**Mahasi Sayadaw**

**Translated by U Aye Maung**

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*Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati*

**'The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.'**

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# **A Discourse on Paticcasamuppada**

## **or**

### **The Doctrine of Dependent Origination**

**By Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw**

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### **Importance Of The Doctrine**

The doctrine of Paticcasamuppada or Dependent Origination is very important in Buddhism. The bodhisattva began with dependent origination when he reflected deeply on the nature of existence and attained Enlightenment. He first pondered old age and death as did every other bodhisattva when he was about to become the Buddha in his last existence. For it was only after seeing the old, the sick and the dead that the bodhisattva saw the ascetic (“samana”) and renounced the world in search of the ageless and the deathless Dhamma. He had seen the evils of life in old age, sickness and death.

Every living being wants to avoid these evils of life but there is no end to these evils, which follow him in one existence after another. In view of this endless process of life, all living beings appear to be in bondage and subject to suffering. Life is in fact an infinite process of births and deaths. The fate of fowls and ducks is terrible indeed. Some are eaten up while still in the eggs. If they emerge from the eggs they do not live long but are killed when they grow up a little. They are born only to be killed for human consumption. If the fate of a living being is thus to be repeatedly killed it is gloomy and frightful indeed.

But the fowls and ducks appear to be well content with their lot in life. They apparently enjoy life, quacking, crowing, eating and fighting with one another. They may think that they have a lot of time to live although in fact they have little time to be happy, their life being a matter of days or months, with each of them coming into existence and then dying after a short time.

The span of human life, too, is not very long for the man in his fifties or sixties the past seems in retrospect as recent as yesterday. Sixty or seventy years on earth is a day in the life of a deva which is, however, very short in the eyes of a Brahma who may live as long as the duration of the worlds (“kappa”). But even the Brahma who outlives hundreds of worlds is insignificant and his life is short in the context of samsaric eternity. Devas and Brahmas, too, have to age and die eventually. Although they are not subject to sickness and marked dotage, age tells on them invisibly in due course of time. So every living being has to face old age and death and nobody can escape from these evils of life.

## Reflection Of The Bodhisattva

Reflecting on the origin of old age, the bodhisattva traced back the chain of dependent origination from the end to the beginning. Old age and death have their origin in rebirth which in turn is due to “kammabhava” (condition or kamma for renewed existence). Kammabhava stems from grasping or attachment (upadana), which is caused by craving (tanha). Craving arises from feeling (vedana), which is produced by sense-bases (ayatana) such as eye, visual form, etc. Sense-bases are the product of nama-rupa (consciousness and corporeality) which results from “vinnana” (consciousness) which is again caused by “nama-rupa”.

The full Pali texts about Paticcasamuppada attribute vinnana to sankhárá (kamma-formations) and sankhárá to avijja (ignorance). But the bodhisattva’s reflection is confined to the interdependence of “nama-rupa” and vinnana in the present life. In other words, he reflected on the correlation between vinnana and nama-rupa, leaving out of account the former's relation to past existence. We may assume, therefore, that for the yogis, reflection on the present life will suffice to ensure the successful practice of vipassana.

### Anuloma Reasoning

The bodhisattva reasoned about the correlation between vinnana and nama-rupa thus: This vinnana has no cause other than nama-rupa. From nama-rupa there results vinnana; from vinnana there arises nama-rupa. Hence, from the correlation between vinnana and nama-rupa there arises birth, old age and death; there may be successive births or successive deaths.

Moreover vinnana causes nama-rupa; nama-rupa causes sense-bases (ayatana). From sense-bases there arises contact; contact leads to feeling; feeling gives rise to craving; craving to grasping; and grasping results in rebirth which in turn leads to old age, death, anxiety, grief and other kinds of mental and physical sufferings.

Then the bodhisattva reflected on dependent origination negatively. If there were no vinnana there could be no nama-rupa; if no nama-rupa, then no ayatana and so on. The negation of the first link in the chain of causation leads to the extinction of suffering that has beset us ceaselessly in the infinite series of samsaric existences. After this reflection on dependent origination in its positive and negative aspects, the bodhisattva contemplated the nature of the aggregates of grasping. Then he attained the successive insights and fruitions (magga-phala) on the Aryan holy path and finally became the all-Enlightened Buddha. Every bodhisattva attained supreme Enlightenment after such contemplation. They did not learn what and how to contemplate from others but owing to cumulative potential (parami) that they had acquired through innumerable lifetimes, they contemplated as mentioned before and attained Enlightenment.

## **Beyond Reasoning And Speculation**

Then when it was time to preach, the Buddha thought thus: This Dhamma, which I know, is very profound. It is hard to understand; it is so sublime and so conducive to inner peace. It is not accessible to intellect and logic (atakkavacaró). It is subtle and it is to be realized only by the wise.

All over the world, philosophers have racked their brains about freedom from old age, sickness and death. But freedom from these evils means Nibbána and Nibbána is beyond the reach of reason and intellect. It is to be realized only through the practice of the middle way and vipassana. Most philosophers rely on intellect and logic, and there are various doctrines, which they have conceived for the welfare of all living beings. But these doctrines are based on speculations that do not help anyone to attain vipassana insight, let alone the supreme goal of Nibbána. Even the lowest stage of vipassana insight, viz., insight into the distinction between nama and rupa does not admit any intellectual approach. The insight dawns on the yogi only when, with the development of concentration, and in accordance with Satipatthána method he watches the nama-rupa process and distinguishes between consciousness and corporeality, e.g. the desire to bend the hand and bent hand, the ear and the sound on the one hand and the consciousness of hearing on the other and so forth. Such knowledge is not vague and speculative; it is vivid and empirical.

It is said on the authority of scriptures that nama-rupas are in a constant flux and that we should watch their arising and passing away. But for the beginner this is easier said than done. The beginner has to exert strenuous effort to overcome hindrances (nivarana). Even freedom from nivarana helps him only to distinguish between nama and rupa. It does not ensure insight into their arising and passing away. This insight is attained only after concentration has been developed and perception has become keen with the practice of mindfulness. Constant mindfulness of arising and vanishing leads to insight into anicca, dukkha and anattá of all phenomena. But as merely the beginning of lower vipassana, this insight is a far cry from the path and its fruition. Hence the description of the Dhamma as something beyond logic and speculation.

## **Dhamma Is Only For The Wise**

The Dhamma is subtle (nipuno); it is to be realized only by the wise (panditavedaniyo). Here the wise means only those who have wisdom (paññá) relating to vipassana and the path and its goal. The Dhamma has nothing to do with the secular knowledge “per se” possessed by world philosophers, religious founders, writers or great scientists who can split atoms. But it can be realized by any one irrespective of sex, age or education; anyone who contemplates nama-rupa at the moment of their arising, passes through vipassana insights progressively and attains the Aryan path and its goal.

Taking stock of the nature of all living beings, the Buddha found that most of them were mired in sensual pleasure. There were of course a few exceptions like the five companions of Siddhartha in the forest retreat or the two Brahmins who were later to become the two chief disciples of the Buddha. But the majority of mankind regard the enjoyment of pleasure as the summum bonum of life. They are like children who delight in playing with their toys the whole day. The child's toys and games make no sense to adults but grown-up people too derive pleasure from the toys of the sensual world, that is, from the company of their children and grand-children. Such sensual pleasure has no appeal for Buddhas and Arahats. It is highly esteemed by ordinary men and devas because they have no sense of higher values such as jhana, vipassana and Nibbána.

A person who is thus fond of sensual pleasure may be likened to a peasant living in out-of-the-way rural areas. To the urbanites those places are wholly devoid of the amenities of life, what with poor food, poor clothes, dirty dwellings, muddy footpaths and so forth. But the villagers are happy and they never think of leaving their native place. Likewise, common people and devas delight in their sensual objects. Whatever the teaching of the Buddha and the Arahats, they love pleasure and spend all their time indulging in it. They feel ill at ease in the absence of sensual objects. They are so much pleased with their families, attendants and possessions that they cannot think of anything higher than sensual pleasure. Because of their deep-rooted love of pleasure, it is hard for them to understand or appreciate the subtle, profound Paticcasamuppada and Nibbána.

## **Difficulty Of Understanding**

The Buddha-Dhamma makes little appeal to the masses since it is diametrically opposed to their sensual desire. People do not like even an ordinary sermon, let alone a discourse on Nibbána, if it has no sensual touch. They do not seem interested in our teaching and no wonder, since it is devoid of melodious recitation, sentimental stories, hilarious jokes and other attractions. It is acceptable only to those who have practiced “vipassana” or who seek the Dhamma on which they can rely for methods of meditation and extinction of defilements.

But it is a mistake to deprecate, as some do, the sermons containing stories, jokes, etc., as Sutta sermons. Suttas differ basically from popular sermons in that they are profound, as witness Anattalakkhana Sutta, Satipatthána Sutta and so forth. The doctrine of Dependent Origination too belongs to Sutta Pitaka. It is to be labeled Abhidhamma only because it is preached in the fashion of Abhidhamma Pitaka.

Since our teaching is unadulterated Dhamma, some people confuse it with Abhidhamma and cannot follow it, much less grasp the Path and Nibbána, which it emphasizes. Paticcasamuppada is hard to understand because it concerns the correlations between causes and effects. There is no ego entity that exists

independently of the law of causation. It was hard to accept this fact before the Buddha proclaimed the Dhamma.

The commentaries also point out the abstruse character of the doctrine. According to them there are four Dhammas, which defy understanding, viz., the four noble truths, the nature of a living being, the nature of rebirth and dependent origination.

It is hard to understand and accept the truth of suffering, the truth about its cause, the truth about its cessation and the truth about the way to its extinction. It is hard to appreciate these truths, still harder to teach them to other people.

Secondly, it is hard to understand that a living being is a nama-rupa process without any separate self that the nama-rupa complex is subject to the law of kamma that determines a man's future life according to his good or bad deeds.

In the third place, it is hard to see how rebirth takes place as a result of defilement and kamma without the transfer of nama-rupa from a previous life.

Lastly, it is equally hard to understand Paticcasamuppada. It involves the above three abstruse Dhammas. Its negative aspect concerns the first two noble truths as well as the nature of a living being and rebirth while its positive aspect involves the other two truths. Hence, it is most difficult to grasp or teach the doctrine. It may be easy to explain it to one who has attained the path and Nibbána or one who has studied the Pitaka but it will mean little to one who has neither the illumination nor scriptural knowledge.

The writer of the commentary on the doctrine was qualified to explain it because he might have attained the lower stages of the path or he might have a thorough knowledge of the Pitaka. He refers to its difficulty probably in order that its exposition might be seriously studied by posterity. He likens the difficulty to the plight of a man who has jumped into the sea and cannot get to the bottom. He admits that he has written the exegesis on the basis of the Pitaka and the old commentaries handed down by oral tradition. The same may be said of our teaching. Since it is hard to explain the doctrine, the yogi should pay special attention to it. If he follows the teaching superficially, he will understand nothing and without a fair knowledge of the doctrine, he is bound to suffer in the wilderness of samsaric existence.

The substance of the Paticcasamuppada teaching is as follows.

From ignorance there arises sankhárá (effort or kamma-formation). From kamma-formation there arises consciousness of the new existence. Consciousness gives rise to psychophysical phenomena or nama-rupa. Nama-rupa leads to ayatana (six bases). From ayatana arises the phassa (impression). Phassa causes feeling; feeling leads to craving. From craving there results clinging (upadana). Because of clinging there is the process of becoming (kamma-bhava), from the process of becoming there

arises rebirth (jati) and rebirth leads to old age, death, sorrow, grief and lamentation. Thus arises the whole mass of suffering.

## **What is Avijja (Ignorance)?**

According to the Buddha, avijja is ignorance of the four Noble Truths, viz., the truths about suffering, its cause, its cessation and the way to its cessation. In a positive sense avijja implies misconception or illusion. It makes us mistake what is false and illusory for truth and reality. It leads us astray and so it is labeled “miccha-patipatti-avijja”.

Avijja, therefore, differs from ordinary ignorance. Ignorance of the name of a man or a village does not necessarily mean misinformation whereas the avijja of Paticcasamuppada means something more than ignorance. It is misleading like the ignorance of a man who has lost all sense of direction and who, therefore, thinks that the east is west or that the north is south. The man who does not know the truth of suffering has an optimistic view of life that is full of dukkha (pain and evil).

It is a mistake to seek the truth of dukkha in the book for it is to be found in one's own body. Seeing, hearing, in short, all nama-rupa arising from the six senses are dukkha. For this phenomenal existence is impermanent, undesirable and unpleasant. It may end at any time and so all is pain and suffering. But this dukkha is not realized by living beings who look upon their existence as blissful and good.

So they seek pleasant sense-objects, good sights, good sounds, good food, etc. Their effort to secure what they believe to be the good things of life is due to their illusion (avijja) about their existence. Avijja is here like the green eyeglass that makes a horse eat the dry grass which it mistakes for green grass. Living beings are mired in sensual pleasure because they see every thing through rose-colored glasses. They harbor illusions about the nature of sense-objects and nama-rupa.

A blind man may be easily deceived by another man who offers him a worthless longyi, saying that it is an expensive, high quality longyi. The blind man will believe him and he will like the longyi very much. He will be disillusioned only when he recovers his sight and then he will throw it away at once. Likewise, as a victim of avijja, a man enjoys life, being blind to its anicca, dukkha and anattá. He becomes disenchanted when introspection of nama-rupa makes him aware of the unwholesome nature of his existence.

Introspection of nama-rupa or vipassana contemplation has nothing to do with bookish knowledge. It means thorough watching and ceaseless contemplation of all psycho-physical phenomena that comprise both the sense-objects and the corresponding consciousness. The practice leads to full awareness of their nature. As concentration develops, the yogi realizes their arising and instant vanishing, thereby gaining an insight into their anicca, dukkha and anattá.

Avijja makes us blind to reality because we are unmindful. Un-mindfulness give rise to the illusion of man, woman, hand, leg, etc., in the conventional sense of the terms. We do not know that seeing, for instance, is merely the nama-rupa or psychophysical process, that the phenomenon arises and vanishes, that it is impermanent, unsatisfactory and unsubstantial.

Some people who never contemplate die without knowing anything about nama-rupa. The real nature of nama-rupa process is realized by the mindful person. But the insight does not occur in the beginning when concentration is not yet developed. Illusion or the natural way of consciousness precedes contemplation and so the beginner does not gain a clear insight into the nature of nama-rupa. It is only through steadfast practice that concentration and perception develop and lead to insight-knowledge.

If, for example, while practicing mindfulness, the yogi feels itchy, he is barely aware of being itchy. He does not think of the hand, the leg, or any other part of the body that is itchy nor does the idea of self as the subject of itchiness, "I feel itchy" occur to him. There arises only the continuous sensation of itchiness. The sensation does not remain permanent but passes away as he notes it. The watching consciousness promptly notes every psychophysical phenomenon, leaving no room for the illusion of hand, leg and so on.

Illusion dominates the unmindful person and makes him blind to the unsatisfactory nature (dukkha) of all sense-objects. It replaces dukkha with sukha. Indeed avijja means both ignorance of what is real and misconception that distorts reality.

Because he does not know the truth of dukkha, man seeks pleasant sense-objects. Thus ignorance leads to effort and activity (sankhárá). According to the scriptures, because of avijja there arises sankhárá but there are two links, viz., tanha and upadana between them. Ignorance gives rise to craving (tanha) which later on develops into attachment (upadana). Craving and attachment stem from the desire for pleasure and are explicitly mentioned in the middle part of the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada. When the past is fully described, reference is made to avijja, tanha, upadana, kamma and sankhárá.

## **Ignorance Of The Origin Of Dukkha**

People do not know that craving is the origin (samudaya) of suffering. On the contrary they believe that it is attachment that makes them happy, that without attachment life would be dreary. So they ceaselessly seek pleasant sense-objects, food, clothing, companions and so forth. In the absence of these objects of attachment they usually feel ill at ease and find life monotonous.

For common people life without attachment would be indeed wholly devoid of pleasure. It is tanha that hides the unpleasantness of life and makes it pleasant. But

for the Arahant who has done away with tanha, it is impossible to enjoy life. He is always bent on Nibbāna, the cessation of conditioned suffering.

Tanha cannot exert much pressure even on the yogis (meditator's) when they become absorbed in the practice of vipassana. So some yogis do not enjoy life as much as they did before. On their return from meditation retreat they get bored at home and feel ill at ease in the company of their families. To other people the yogi may appear to be conceited but in fact his behavior is a sign of loss of interest in the workaday world. But if he cannot as yet overcome the sensual desire, his boredom is temporary and he usually gets re-adjusted to his home life in due course. His family need not worry over his mood or behavior for it is not easy for a man to become thoroughly sick of his home life. So the yogi should examine himself and see how much he is really disenchanted with life. If his desire for pleasure lingers, he must consider himself still in the grip of tanha.

Without tanha we would feel discomfited. In conjunction with avijja, tanha makes us blind to dukkha and creates the illusion of sukha. So we frantically seek sources of pleasure. Consider, for example, men's fondness for movies and dramatic performances. These entertainments cost time and money but tanha makes them irresistible although to the person who has no craving for them they are sources of suffering.

A more obvious example is smoking. The smoker delights in inhaling the tobacco smoke but to the non-smoker it is a kind of self-inflicted suffering. The non-smoker is free from all the troubles that beset the smoker. He leads a relatively carefree and happy life because he has no craving for tobacco. Tanha as the source of dukkha is also evident in the habit of betel chewing. Many people enjoy it although in fact it is a troublesome habit.

Like the smoker and the betel-chewer, people seek to gratify their craving and this tanha-inspired effort is the mainspring of rebirth that leads to old age, sickness and death.

Suffering and desire as its cause are evident in everyday life but it is hard to see these truths for they are profound and one can realize them not through reflection but only through the practice of vipassana.

## **Ignorance Of The Third And Fourth Noble Truths**

Avijja also means ignorance of the cessation of dukkha and the way to it. These two truths are also profound and hard to understand for the truth about cessation of dukkha concerns Nibbāna, which is to be realized only on the Aryan holy path, and the truth about the way is certainly known only to the yogi who has attained the path. No wonder that many people are ignorant of these truths.

Ignorance of the end of suffering is widespread and so world religions describe the supreme goal in many ways. Some say that suffering will come to an end automatically in due course of time. Some regard sensual pleasure as the highest good and reject the idea of a future life. This variety of beliefs is due to ignorance of the real Nibbána. Even among Buddhists some hold that Nibbána is an abode or a sort of paradise and there are many arguments about it. All these show how hard it is to understand Nibbána.

In reality Nibbána is the total extinction of the nama-rupa process that occurs ceaselessly on the basis of causal relationship. Thus according to the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada, avijja, sankhárá etc., give rise to nama-rupa, etc., and this causal process involves old age, death and the other evils of life. If avijja, etc., becomes extinct on the Aryan path, so do their effects and all kinds of dukkha and this complete end to dukkha is Nibbána.

For example, a lamp that is refueled will keep on burning, but if it is not refueled there will be a complete extinction of flame. Likewise for the yogi on the Aryan path who has attained Nibbána, all the causes such as avijja, etc., have become extinct and so do all the effects such as rebirth, etc. This means total extinction of suffering, that is, Nibbána that the yogi must understand and appreciate before he actually realizes it.

This concept of Nibbána does not appeal to those who have a strong craving for life. To them the cessation of nama-rupa process would mean nothing more than eternal death. Nevertheless, intellectual acceptance of Nibbána is necessary because on it depends the yogi's whole-hearted and persistent effort to attain the supreme goal.

Knowledge of the fourth truth, viz., truth about the way to the end of dukkha is also of vital importance. Only the Buddhas can proclaim the right path; it is impossible for anyone else, be he a deva, a Brahma or a human being, to do so. But there are various speculations and teachings about the path. Some advocate ordinary morality such as love, altruism, patience, alms-giving, etc., while others stress the practice of mundane jhana. All these practices are commendable. According to the Buddhist teaching, they lead to relative welfare in the deva-Brahma worlds but do not ensure freedom from samsaric dukkha such as old age, etc. So they do not form the right path to Nibbána although they are helpful in the effort to attain it.

Some resort to self-mortification such as fasting, living in a state of nature and so forth. Some worship devas or animals. Some live like animals. From the Buddhist point of view all these represent what is termed “silabbataparamasa,” which means any practice that has nothing to do with the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path comprises right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right contemplation. The path is of three kinds, viz., the basic path, the preliminary path and the Aryan path.

Of these the most vital is the Aryan path but this path should not be the primary objective of the yogi nor does it require him to spend much time and energy on it. For, as the vipassana practice on the preliminary path develops, the insight on the Aryan level occurs for a thought-moment. For example, it requires much time and effort to produce fire by friction but ignition is a matter of a moment's duration. Similarly, the insight on the Aryan path is instantaneous but it pre-supposes much practice of vipassana on the preliminary path.

## **Right View, Etc.**

Vipassana insight is the insight that occurs at every moment of contemplation. The yogi who notes every psycho-physical phenomenon becomes aware of its real nature. Thus he focuses his attention on the bending of his arms or legs and he realizes the elements of rigidity and motion. This means right view in connection with ‘vayodhatu’. Without mindfulness there will arise illusion of "It is the hand", "It is a man", and so forth. Only the mindful yogi sees things as they really are.

The same may be said of right view in regard to sensation in the body, e.g. imagination, intention. When the mind becomes fixed and calm, the yogi finds the nama-rupa phenomena arising and vanishing and so he gains insight into their anicca, dukkha and anattá.

Right belief implies right intention and other associative Dhamma on the path. Insight on the path occurs at every moment of contemplation. With the attainment of perfect insight into the three characteristics of existence, the yogi sees Nibbána. Hence, if Nibbána is to be realized here and now, the practice of vipassana is essential. The yogi who cannot as yet practice vipassana should focus on the path that is the basis of vipassana practice. This basic path means doing good deeds motivated by the belief in Kamma. In other words, it is the practice of Dana, sila etc., in the hope of attaining Nibbána.

All the paths (Magga) - the basic, the preliminary and the Aryan, form the three-fold path leading to Nibbána. In particular, the yogi must recognize the Aryan path as the Dhamma that is to be desired, cherished and adored. Such a recognition is essential to strenuous effort in the practice of vipassana. The yogi must also accept the vipassana Magga as a noble Dhamma and know how to practice it.

Some people are ignorant of the way to Nibbána. On top of that they belittle the Nibbána-oriented good deeds of other people. Some deprecate the teaching and practice of other people although they have never practiced vipassana effectively. Some criticize the right method because they are attached to their wrong method. All these people have avijja, which means ignorance of, and misconception about the right path. It is avijja not to know that Dana, sila and bhávaná lead to Nibbána and it is avijja too to regard Dana, etc. as harmful to one's interest. The more destructive avijja is ignorance of and illusion about the right method of contemplation.

Ignorance of the right path is the most terrible form of avijja. For it makes its victims blind to good deeds and creates illusions, thereby preventing them from attaining human happiness or divine bliss, let alone the Aryan path and Nibbána. Yet most people remain steeped in ignorance, unmindful of the need to devote themselves to Dana, síla and bhávaná.

## **Avijja Leads To Sankhárá**

To them sensual pleasure is the source of happiness, Nibbána as the extinction of nama-rupa is undesirable and the way to it is arduous and painful. So they seek to gratify their desire through three kinds of action (kamma) viz., bodily action, verbal action and mental action. Some of these actions may be ethically good and some may be ethically bad. Some people will practice Dana, etc. for their welfare hereafter, while some will resort to deceit or robbery to become rich.

A Pali synonym for kamma (action) is sankhárá. Sankhárá is also of three kinds, viz., sankhárá by thought, sankhárá by speech and sankhárá by body. Sankhárá presupposes cetana (volition). The function of cetana is to conceive, to urge or to incite and as such it is the mainspring of all actions. It is involved in killing, alms-giving, etc. The yogi knows its nature empirically through contemplation.

In another sense there are three kinds of sankháras, viz., punnabhi (wholesome) sankhárá, with its good kammic result, apunnabhi (unwholesome) sankhárá, with its bad kammic result and anenjabhi-sankhárá that leads to wholesome arupajhana, which literally means immobile jhana. Rupa jhana and all the good actions having the kammic results in the sensual world are to be classified as punnabhi-sankhárá. Punna literally means something that cleanses or purifies. Just as a man washes the dirt off his body with soap, so also we have to rid ourselves of kammic impurities through Dana, síla and bhávaná. These good deeds are conducive to welfare and prosperity in the present life and hereafter.

Another meaning of Punna is the tendency to fulfill the desire of the doer of the good deed. Good deeds help to fulfill various human desires, e.g. the desire for health, longevity, wealth and so forth. If a good deed is motivated by the hope for Nibbána, it leads to a life that makes it possible to attain his goal or it may ensure his happiness and welfare till the end of his last existence. Abhisankhara is the effort to do something for one's own welfare. It tends to have good or evil kammic results. So punnabhi-sankhárá is good deed with good kammic result. There are eight types of good deed in sensual sphere (kamavacarakusala) and five types in fine-material sphere (rupavacara). All these may be summed up as of three kinds, viz., Dana, síla and bhávaná.

Giving Dana gladly means wholesome consciousness, which is kammically very fruitful. So the donor should rejoice before, during and after the act of alms giving. In the scriptures, this kind of Dana is credited with great kammic productivity. The

attitude of the donor may also be one of indifference (upekkha) but, if the mind is clear, his act of Dana too has high kammic potential. Any act of alms-giving that is based on the belief in kamma is rational and it may bear fruit in the form of rebirth with no predisposition to greed, ill-will and ignorance. An act of Dana that has nothing to do with a sense of its moral value or the belief in kammic result is good but unintelligent and it will lead to rebirth with no great intelligence. It may bear such kammic fruit in everyday life but it does not make the donor intelligent enough to attain the path in his next life.

Again one may do a good deed spontaneously without being urged by others (asankharika-kusala); some do good deeds at the instigation of others (sasankharika-kusala). Of these two kinds of good deeds, the former is kammically more fruitful than the latter. When we consider the four kinds of good deeds mentioned earlier in terms of these last two attributes, we have a total of eight types of wholesome consciousness in the sensual sphere. Whenever we do a good deed, we are prompted to do so by one of these kusala Dhammas; when we practice concentration and meditation, we have to begin with these eight types of wholesome Dhammas.

If it is bhávaná that can lead to jhana, the yogi attains rupavacara jhana when his samádhi is well-developed. Jhana means total concentration of mind on an object of mental training. Samatha jhana is concentration for bare tranquility. Jhana samádhi is like the flame burning in still air. According to the Suttas, the rupavacara jhana has four levels; in Abhidhamma it has five levels.

## Unwholesome Kammass

Opposed to punnabhisankhara is apunnabhisankhara or unwholesome kamma formations. These immoral deeds lead to lower worlds and evils in human life such as ugliness, infirmities and so forth. They number twelve in terms of consciousness, viz., eight rooted in greed (lobha), two rooted in ill-will (dosa) and two rooted in ignorance (moha).

The lobha-based Dhammas comprise four with wrong belief and four without it. Of the four Dhammas with wrong belief, two are joyful, spontaneous (asankharika) Dhamma and joyful but un-spontaneous (sasankharika) Dhamma. The neutral (upekkha) unwholesome Dhammas may be classified in the same way. Likewise there are two joyful lobha-based Dhammas without wrong belief and two lobha-based Dhammas without joy or wrong belief. Every kamma is characterized by one of these eight lobha-based Dhammas. The dosa-based Dhammas are of two kinds, viz., spontaneous kamma and un-spontaneous kamma. This dosa-based consciousness is the mainspring of anger, dejection, fear and revulsion.

The two kinds of moha-based consciousness are doubt (vicikiccha) and restlessness (uddhacca). The former concerns doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, síla, samádhi, the idea of a future life and so forth. The latter refers to the person who is distracted and absent-minded. The mind is seldom calm and it usually goes

wandering when it is not restrained through the practice of bhávaná. It is said, however, that uddhacca does not lead to the lower worlds. The other eleven unwholesome Dhammas do so under certain circumstances and even in case of a good rebirth, they usually have bad kammic effects such as sickliness. These twelve kinds of unwholesome volition (cetana) are called apunnabhisankhara.

All over the world people wish to be happy and so they strive for their material welfare in the present life and hereafter. But it is greed and ill-will that largely characterize their activities. Wholesome consciousness is confined to those who have good friends, who have heard their Dhamma and who think rationally.

Some go morally astray, being misled by their selfish teacher. In the lifetime of the Buddha, a lay Buddhist abused good monks and so on his death he became a peta in the latrine of the monastery he had donated to the Sangha. He told the elder thera Moggallana about his misdeed when the latter saw him with his divine eye. What a terrible fate for a man who had materially supported the Sangha for his welfare in after-life, but was misguided to the lower world by his teacher. This shows that the person whose company we seek should possess not only deep knowledge but also good character.

The mark of a good man is abstinence from any act, speech or thought that is harmful to other people. Those who keep company with good men or good Bhikkhus have the opportunity to hear the good Dhamma and if he thinks wisely, his thoughts will lead to wholesome kammass. On the other hand evil teachers or friends, false teachings and improper thoughts may lead to moral disaster. Some who bore unblemished character in the beginning were ruined by corrupt thoughts. They were convicted of theft, robbery or misappropriation and their long-standing reputation was damaged once and forever. All their suffering had its origin in the illusion of happiness. Contrary to their expectations, they found themselves in trouble when it was too late. Some misdeeds do not produce immediate kammic results but they come to light in due course and lead to suffering. If retribution does not follow the evildoer here and now, it overtakes him in afterlife as in the case of the donor of the monastery who became a peta for his evil words.

His teacher who had misguided him fared worse after his death. For he occupied a place below his former pupil and had to live on his excreta. The kammic result of his misdeed was indeed frightful. He had committed it for his own end but it backfired and he had to suffer terribly for it.

Some jungle tribes make animal sacrifices to gods for good harvest, security, etc. These primitive beliefs still prevail among some urban people. Some worship the chief nat'as as if he were the Buddha. Some kill animals to feed guests on the occasion of religious alms giving. Even some ignorant Buddhists have misgivings about this practice. Whatever the object of the donor, killing has bad kammic result and it is not a good deed despite the belief of the killer to the contrary.

A good deed bears the mark of moral purity. Killing or hurting a living being cannot be morally pure in any sense if you identify yourself with the victim. He faces death

or endures ill-treatment only because he cannot avoid it. He will surely retaliate if he is in a position to do so. Some people pray for vengeance and so the killer is killed in his next existence or he has suffer in hell for his misdeed. The Pitaka abounds in many instances of the kammic consequences of killing.

Some long for human or deva life and devote themselves to Dana, síla and bhávaná. Their good deeds serve to fulfill their wishes and lead to welfare in afterlife, but every life is subject to old age and death, and human life is inextricably bound up with ill-health, and mental suffering. Some crave for the Brahma-world and practice jhana. They may live happily for many kappa's (world-systems) as Brahmas. But when life has run its course, they will be reborn as human beings or devas and any evil deed that they do may bring them to the lower worlds. After all, the glorification of the Brahma-life is an illusion.

The illusion of happiness is not confined to common people. The illusion (vipallasa and avijja) that makes us regard dukkha as sukha lingers at the first two stages of the holy path, and even at the Anagami stage the yogi still mistakes material life (rupa-bhava) and immaterial life (arupa-bhava) for a life of bliss. So the object of the Ariyas at the first three stages is to do good. As for the common people, they are mired in all the four illusions that make them regard the impermanent as permanent, the dukkha of nama-rupa as sukha, the impersonal as personality (attá) and the unpleasant as pleasant. Associated with these illusions are the four avijjas. Because of these misconceptions and ignorance, every bodily, verbal or mental action gives rise to good or bad kamma. A good kamma arises only from volitional effort coupled with faith, mindfulness and so forth. If the mind is left to itself, it is likely to produce bad kamma.

## **Rejection Of Good Kamma Means Bad Kamma**

Some people misinterpret the lack of good or bad kamma on the part of the Arahats and say that we should avoid doing good deeds. For an ordinary person the rejection of good kamma will mean the upsurge of bad kamma, just as the exodus of good people from a city leaves only fools and rogues, or the removal of useful trees is followed by the growth of useless grass and weeds. The man who rejects good deeds is bound to do bad deeds that will land him in the lower worlds. It will be hard for him to return to the human world.

In point of fact, the Arahats' dissociation from good kamma means only that because of the extinction of avijja, his action is kammically unproductive. Indeed the Arahats do good deeds such as revering the elder theras, preaching, giving alms, helping living beings who are in trouble and so forth. But, with their total realization of the four noble truths and the elimination of avijja, their good actions do not have any kammic effect. So it is said that the Arahats do not have good kamma, not that he avoids doing good deeds.

An ordinary person who does not care for good deeds because of his avijja and mistaken view, will build up only bad kamma that are bound to lead to the lower worlds. In fact the lack of the desire to do good is a sign of abysmal ignorance that makes the holy path, and Nibbána remote. The mind becomes inclined to good deeds in so far as avijja loses its hold on it. A sotápanna yoga is more interested in doing good than when he was an ordinary man. The same may be said of those at the higher stages of the Aryan path. The only difference is the increasing desire to give up doing things irrelevant to the path and devote more time to contemplation. So, good deeds should not be lumped together with bad deeds and purposely avoided. Every action that is bound up with avijja means either good kamma or bad kamma. In the absence of good kamma all will be bad kamma.

## **Ignorance and Illusion**

Truth and falsehood are mutually exclusive. If you do not know the truth, you accept falsehood and vice versa. Those who do not know the Four Noble Truths have misconceptions about dukkha which, posing as sukha, deceive and oppress them.

Apart from tanha which, when gratified affords pleasure, everything in the sensual world is real dukkha. All sense-objects are subject to ceaseless flux and unreliable. Yet to the ignorant person they appear to be good and pleasant. They make him nostalgic about what they regard as their happy days in the past and optimistic about their future. Because of their misconception, they long for what they consider to be the good things in life. This is the cause of their dukkha but they do not realize it. On the contrary they think that their happiness depends on the fulfillment of their desires. So they see nothing wrong with their desire for sensual pleasure. In fact, the truths about the end of dukkha and the way to it are foreign to most people. Some who learn these truths from others or accept them intellectually do not appreciate them. They do not care for Nibbána or the way to it. They think that the way is beset with hardships and privations.

The hope for happiness is the mainspring of human action. Actions in deed, speech or thought are called kamma or sankhárá. We have referred to three kinds of sankhárá, the two kinds of good kamma comprising the first sankhárá, viz., the eight good kammas in the sensual world and the good kammas in the material world; we have also mentioned two kinds of good kamma or consciousness, viz., one associated with intelligence and the other divorced from intelligence. In the practice of vipassana the yogi's mind is intelligent if it becomes aware of the real nature of nama-rupa (anicca, dukkha, anattá), through contemplation. It is not intelligent if it means little more than the recitation of Pali words and superficial observation. In ordinary morality a sense of moral values is intelligent if it is associated with the belief in the law of kamma.

Some people say that an intelligent act of Dana must involve the contemplation of the anicca, dukkha and anattá of the donor, the recipient and the offering. This view is based on Atthasalini (a commentary on Abhidhamma Pitaka), which mentions the contemplation on the impermanence of everything after giving alms. But the reference is to contemplation after the act of Dana, not before or while doing it. Moreover, the object is not to make the act intelligent but to create wholesome kamma in vipassana practice. If by intelligent Dana is meant only the Dana that presupposes such contemplation, all the other Dana of non-Buddhists would have to be dubbed unintelligent acts and it is of course absurd to do so.

The accounts of alms giving by bodhisattvas make no mention of contemplation nor did the Buddha insist on it as a pre-requisite to an act of Dana. The scriptures say only that the kammic potential of Dana depends on the spiritual level of the recipient and this is the only teaching that we should consider in alms giving. If the donor and the recipient were to be regarded as mere nama-rupa subject to anicca, etc., they would be on equal footing. The act of Dana would then lack inspiration and much kammic potential.

In fact the object of alms giving is not vipassana contemplation but the benefits accruing to the donor. So the Buddha points out the would-be recipients who can make Dana immensely beneficial and the importance of right reflection (belief in kamma).

On one occasion Visakha, the lay woman asked the Buddha for lifelong permission to make eight kinds of offering to the Sangha; these were (1) bathing garments for the Bhikkhus, (2) food for guest-monks, (3) food for traveling monks, (4) food for sick monks, (5) food for the monk who attended on a sick monk, (6) medicine for the sick monk, (7) rice-gruel for the Sangha and (8) bathing garments for the Bhikkhunis. The Buddha asked Visakha what benefits she hoped to have in offering such things and the substance of Visakha's reply is as follows.

"At the end of the lent, the Bhikkhus from all parts of the country will come to see the Buddha. They will tell the Lord about the death of certain monks and ask him about their rebirth and stages on the holy path that they (the deceased monks) had attained. The Lord will reveal their spiritual attainments. I will then approach the visiting monks and ask them whether their late fellow-monks had ever visited Savatthi city. If they say yes, I will conclude that the Noble one who is now at the sotápanna or any other stage on the holy path must have certainly used one of my offerings. This remembrance of my good kamma will fill me with joy. It will be conducive to peace, tranquility and self-development."

Here it is worthy of note that the reference is not to the contemplation on the impermanence of the nama rupa of the deceased monks but to the spiritual attainments that distinguished them in afterlife. Importance is attached to the contemplation that leads to ecstasy and training in self-development. Hence, the

most appropriate object of contemplation in doing Dana is the noble attributes of the recipient such as the noble character of the Buddha when laying flowers at the shrine, the holy life of the Bhikkhu when offering food and so forth.

Preaching or hearing the Dhamma is a wholesome kamma and it is an intelligent act if the Dhamma is understood. Every good deed based on the belief in kamma is an intelligent kamma. Without the belief, a good act is wholesome but unintelligent as are the good acts of some children who imitate the elders and worship the Buddha image and the good acts of some people who reject the belief in kamma but are helpful, polite and charitable.

The five material wholesome Dhammas (rupakusala-dhamma) are those associated with five jhanas. They are accessible only through the practice of samatha that leads to jhana. The eight wholesome Dhammas and the five material wholesome Dhammas form the punnabhisankhara. Apunnabhisankhara or unwholesome kammass number twelve in terms of consciousness. Here sankhára means volition (cetana). Of the twelve unwholesome sankhárás eight are based on greed, two on anger and two on ignorance.

The greed-based (lobha-mula) consciousness is of eight kinds viz., four with joy and attachment and four without joy, but with attachment (upekkha sahagutta). Of the first four kinds two are bound up with belief and, of the two with the belief or without the belief, one is non-spontaneous (sasankharika) and the other is spontaneous (asankharika). Belief is of three kinds, viz., belief in ego-entity, belief in immortality of ego, and belief in annihilation of the ego without there being any kammic effect of good or bad deeds.

Few people are free from the belief in ego-entity. The belief dominates those who do not know that life is a nama-rupa process without a soul or a being. The belief is weak among those who have some knowledge of Buddhist scriptures but their bookish knowledge does not help them to overcome it completely. The yogis who have had a clear insight into the nature of nama-rupa through contemplation are usually free from the belief. Yet they may hark back to the belief if they stop contemplating before they attain the path. As for the common people, the ego-belief is deep-rooted, making them think that it is the self or the ego which is the agent of whatever they do or feel or think. Again those who believe in total extinction after death and reject the idea of future life and kamma have unwholesome consciousness that is bound up with nihilistic beliefs.

Hatred-based (dosa-mula) consciousness comprises doubt and restlessness. Doubts about the Buddha, Nibbána, anattá and so forth are labeled vicikiccha.

Hatred-based consciousness is of two kinds, viz., voluntary consciousness and involuntary consciousness. But there are many kinds of hatred such as anger, envy, anxiety, grief, fear and so forth. Ignorance-based (moha-mula) consciousness

comprises doubt and restlessness. Doubts about the Buddha, Nibbána, anattá and so forth are labeled vicikiccha. The mind is subject to doubt (uddhacca) when it wanders here and there restlessly.

Thus apunnabhisankhara means the eight greed-based mental factors, two hatred-based mental factors and two ignorance-based mental factors. It is opposed to punnabhisankhara. It serves to purify nama-rupa, leads to good rebirth with good kammic results whereas the other defiles the nama-rupa process and leads to bad rebirth with bad kammic results.

People do evil deeds for their welfare. They kill, steal, rob or give false evidence at court for their well-being. Even those who kill their parents do so to achieve their own ends. For example, prince Ajatashatru killed his father to become king. Misguided by his teacher Devadatta, he had concluded that he would be able to enjoy life as a king for a longer period if he could do away with his father and take his place. For his great evil of patricide and the murder of a sotápanna at that, he was seized with remorse and anxiety that caused him physical suffering as well. Later on, he was killed by his son and reborn in hell where he is now suffering terribly for his misdeed.

In the time of Kakusandha Buddha the Mara called Susi did his utmost to harm the Buddha and the Sangha. Failing to achieve his object, he possessed a man and stoned to death the chief disciple Arahat behind the Buddha. For this horrible crime he instantly landed in Avici hell, the lowest of the thirty-one worlds of living beings. As a Mara he had lorded it over others but in Avici he lay prostrate under the heels of the guardians of hell. He had hoped to rejoice over the fulfillment of his evil desire, but now he had to suffer for his evil kamma. This is true of evildoers all over the world.

It is the hope for happiness also that forms the mainspring of other two types of action, viz., punnabhisankhara and anenjabhisankhara. Anenjabhisankhara means the four arupajhana-kusala Dhammas. Anenja means equanimity or self-possession. A loud noise nearby may upset the equanimity (Samapatti) of a yogi who is absorbed in rupa jhana. But arupa jhana is invulnerable to such distractions. Arupa jhana is of four kinds according as it relates to (1) sphere of unbounded space (akasanancayatana jhana), sphere of nothingness (akincannayatana jhana) and (4) sphere of neither perception-nor-non-perception (nevasannasannayatana jhana). These four jhanas are the sankhárás that lead to the four arupa worlds. Apunnabhisankhara leads to the four lower worlds and punnabhisankhara leads to human, deva and rupa-Brahma worlds.

People do these three kinds of kammás or sankhárás for their welfare and as a result there arises vinnana or consciousness. With vinnana there also come into being nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa, etc., of the new existence.

## **Sankhárá Causes Vinnana**

Because of avijja there is sankhárá, which in turn causes vinnana. As a result of good or bad kammās in the previous life there arises the stream of consciousness beginning with rebirth consciousness in the new life. Evil deeds may, for example, lead to the four lower worlds. After that there arises the stream of vinnana called bhavanga-citta which functions ceaselessly when the six kinds of vithi consciousness do not occur at the moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, eating, touching and thinking. In other words, bhavanga is the kind of sub consciousness that we have when we are asleep. We die with this sub consciousness and it is then called cuticitta. So the rebirth-consciousness, the sub consciousness and the cuti or death-consciousness represent the mind which results from the kamma of previous life.

The five kinds of consciousness associated with the five unpleasant sense-objects such as unpleasant eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc., are due to unwholesome kamma as are (1) the consciousness that is focused on these five sense-objects and (2) the inquiring (santirana) consciousness. There are altogether seven types of consciousness that stem from bad kamma (apunnabhisankhara). As for anenjabhisankhara, because of the four arupakusala-Dhammas there arises the resulting arupa-consciousness in the four immaterial worlds in the form of rebirth-consciousness in the beginning, the bhavanga citta in the middle, and the cuticitta as the end of existence.

Similarly, because of the five rupakusala-dhamma there arise five rupa vipakacittas in rupa-Brahma worlds. Then there are eight mahavipakacittas corresponding to eight good kammās in the sensual sphere. They form the rebirth, bhavanga and cuticittas in the human world and six deva-worlds. They also register pleasant sense-objects (tadarammana) after seven impulse-moments (javana) that occur on seeing, hearing, etc. Also due to good consciousness associated with five pleasant sense-objects, the registering consciousness, the joyful, inquiring consciousness and the nonchalant, inquiring consciousness. Hence, the resulting (vipaka) consciousness is of thirty-two kinds, viz., four arupavipaka, five rupavipaka, seven akusala vipaka and sixteen kusala vipaka in sensual sphere. All these thirty-two vipaka are resultants of sankhárá.

## **How Sankhárá Leads To New Vinnana**

It is very important, but hard to understand how sankhárá gives rise to rebirth-consciousness. Ledi Sayadaw points out that this part of the teaching on paticcasamuppada leaves much room for misunderstanding. It is necessary to understand the extinction of the last consciousness (cuticitta) together with all nama-rupa as well as the immediate arising of the rebirth-consciousness together with the new nama-rupa as a result of good or bad kammās in the case of living beings who are not yet free from defilements. Lack of this understanding usually leads to the

belief in transmigration of souls (sassataditthi) or the belief in annihilation after death (ucchedaditthi), which is held by modern materialists.

The belief in annihilation is due to ignorance of the relation between cause and effect after death. It is easy to see how avijja leads to sankhára and how the sense-bases (ayatana), contact, sensation, craving, etc., form links in the chain of causation for these are evident in the facts of life. But the emergence of new existence following death is not apparent and, hence, the belief that there is nothing after death.

Learned people who think on the basis of faith usually accept the teaching that sankhára gives rise to rebirth consciousness. But it does not lend itself to purely rational and empirical approach and today it is being challenged by the materialistic view of life. The way rebirth takes place is crystal clear to the yogi who has practiced vipassana. He finds that the units of consciousness arise and pass away ceaselessly, that they appear and disappear one after another rapidly. This is what he discovers by experience, not what he learns from his teachers. Of course he does not know so much in the beginning. He discovers the fact only when he attains sammasana and udayabbaya insights. The general idea of death and rebirth mental units dawns on him with the development of paccayapariggaha insights but, it is sammasana and udayabbaya insights that leave no doubt about rebirth. On the basis of his insight, he realizes that death means the disappearance of the last unit of consciousness and that rebirth means the arising of the first unit of consciousness in the manner of the vanishing and arising of consciousness-units that he notes in the practice of vipassana.

Those who do not have vipassana insight miss the point. They believe in a permanent ego and identify it with the mind. It is rejected by those who have a good knowledge of Abhidhamma but, it lingers in some people because of attachment to it in their previous lives. Even the contemplating yogi who is not yet intellectually mature sometimes feels tempted to accept it.

## **Sassata And Ucheda**

To the ordinary people who are wedded to the ego-belief, death means the extinction of individual entity or its displacement to another abode or existence. This is a misconception called ucchedaditthi if it is the belief in annihilation, or sassataditthi if it is belief in the transfer of the soul to another body or abode. Some believe that consciousness develops spontaneously with the growth and maturation of the body (ahetukaditthi).

Some have misconceptions about samsara or nama-rupa process. They regard the body as the temporary abode of the life principle that passes on from one abode to another. The disintegration of the physical body is undeniable, but some people pin their faith to the resurrection of the body in due course of time and so they treat the

dead body with respect. These views confirm the Ledi Sayadaw's statement that the causal links between sankhára and vinnana lends itself to misinterpretation.

Ordinary Buddhists are not wholly free from these misconceptions but, because of their belief in the Buddhist doctrine of anattá, they do not harbor the illusions so blindly as to harm their vipassana practice. So even without a thorough knowledge about the nature of death, rebirth and nama-rupa, they can enlighten themselves through contemplation.

For example, shortly after the parinibbána of the Buddha, the thera Channa practiced vipassana but made little progress because of his ego-belief. Then as he followed Ánanda's discourse on Paticcasamuppada, he contemplated, overcame his illusion and attained Arahathship. Again, in the time of the Buddha, Bhikkhu Yamaka believed that the Arahath was annihilated after his parinibbána. Shariputra summoned and preached to him. While following the sermon, Yamaka contemplated, and achieved liberation. So those who have faith in the Buddha need not be disheartened. If they practiced vipassana zealously and whole-heartedly, they will become enlightened.

Because of their ignorance and doubts about the nature of death and conception or leaning to uccheda belief, some people ask whether there is a future life after death. The question by itself presupposes attá or soul or life-force in a living being. Materialism rejects the idea of soul but the ego-illusion is implicit in its differentiation of the living from the dead. The question of those who accept the ego explicitly or by implication are hard to answer from the Buddhist point of view. If we say that there is future life, they will conclude that we support the ego-belief. But Buddhism does not categorically deny the future life. Hence, the Buddha's refusal to answer this question. Moreover, it is hard to produce evidence for ordinary people. Psychic persons may be able to point out the hell or the deva-worlds but skeptics will dismiss such exhibition as black magic or chicanery. So the Buddha did not answer the question directly, but said that there is continuum of nama-rupa process in the wake of death without the extinction of defilements.

The problem of future life does not admit any intellectual approach. It is to be settled only through certain Buddhist practices. These practices enable the yogi to acquire psychic powers by virtue of which he can see the dead, the good men who have attained the deva-worlds, as well as the evil persons who are suffering in the nether worlds. What he sees is as clear as what an observer who occupies a position directly opposite two houses sees - persons passing from one house to the other. Among the many devas, animals, etc., of the higher and lower realms, he (the yogi) can easily find the person whom he wants to see.

It is possible for the yogis to attain jhana and psychic powers. There is no teaching, which rules out this possibility. Some practicing yogis have in fact had paranormal contact with the other world (paraloka). But paranormal gifts are hard to come by.

Their emergence depends on intense concentration and so the easier way is to practice vipassana. The problem of life becomes fairly clear when the development of paccaya-pariggaha insight makes the yogi well aware of the nature of death and conception. It becomes clearer when he attains sammasana, udayabbaya and bhanga insights for then he sees clearly how the consciousness units arise and pass away ceaselessly one after another and how death means the passing away of the last unit to be followed by conception or the arising of the first consciousness-unit in a new existence. But this insight is still vulnerable and it is only when the yogi attains at least the sotapatti stage that he becomes wholly free of all doubts about future life. The trouble is that people wish to inquire about it instead of practicing vipassana. Some seek the verdict of Western scientists and philosophers while others accept the teaching of those who are reputed to be Arahats with psychic powers. But, the best thing is to seek the answer through vipassana practice instead of relying on other people.

At the stage of udayabbaya insight the yogi can clearly see how in the wake of the consciousness-unit that has passed away, there follows a new unit attached to a sense-object. On the basis of this experience he realizes how the new existence begins with consciousness-unit that arises, conditioned by attachment to an object at the moment of dying in a previous life.

Before death the stream of consciousness depends on the physical body and is continuous with one unit following the other uninterruptedly. After death, the body disintegrates and the stream of consciousness shifts to the physical process in another abode. This may be likened to the continuous appearance of light in an electric bulb through the ceaseless generation of electricity. When the bulb is burnt up, the light goes out but the potential electric energy keeps on coming. Light reappears when the old bulb is replaced with a new one. Here, the bulb, energy and light are all changing physical processes and we should be mindful of their impermanent character.

The commentary cites the analogies of echo, flame, impression of a seal and reflection in the mirror. Echo is reflection or repetition of a sound produced by the impact of sound waves on walls, woods, etc. But it does not mean the transfer of the original sound to a distant place although we cannot deny the causal relation between the sound and the echo either. When you look at a mirror your face is reflected on it, but you must not confuse the reflection with your face although it is causally related to the latter. A lamp, which is burning, may be used to light up another lamp. The flame of the new lamp is obviously not the flame of the old lamp since the latter is still burning but, neither is it causally unrelated to the flame of the old lamp. Lastly, the seal leaves an impression that is like its face, but it is not the face and it cannot occur in the absence of the seal either.

These analogies help to throw some light on the nature of rebirth process. When a person is dying, his kamma, the signs and visions related to it and visions of the

future life appear. After his death, there arises the rebirth consciousness conditioned by one of these visions at the last moment of the previous existence. So rebirth does not mean the passage of the last unit of consciousness to another life but, since it is conditioned by the visions on death-bed, it is rooted in avijja, sankhára, etc., that form the links in the chain of causation leading to the visions of the dying person.

Thus, rebirth consciousness is not the consciousness of the dying person but it is causally related to the previous life. Two consecutive units of consciousness are separate but, given the stream of consciousness, we speak of the same individual for the whole day, the whole year or the whole lifetime. Likewise, we speak of the last consciousness on death-bed together with rebirth consciousness as representing a single person. A man's attainment of deva or any other world is to be understood in the same sense. It does not mean the transfer of nama-rupa as a whole. We speak of a man or a person only because the rebirth concerns the stream of causally related mental units.

So it is ucchedaditthi to believe that a person has nothing to do with a previous life since every person is annihilated on death. Most Buddhists are free from this belief. As the two consecutive lives are causally related, we speak of one person in conventional terms.

But we must guard ourselves against the sassata view that rebirth means the transfer of the ego to a new abode.

The yogi who has mature vipassana insight does not harbor the two beliefs because he is fully aware of the rising and passing away of mental units in the present life and their causal relations. This awareness leaves no room for the illusions of personal immortality or annihilation. The nature of consciousness is evident even to those who think objectively. Joy may be followed by dejection and vice versa or, a serene mind may give way to irritation and vice versa. These changing states of consciousness clearly shows its heterogeneous nature. Moreover, mental states may be associated through similarity, as for example, the intention to do a certain thing at night may occur again in the morning. The mental states do not differ, but are causally related to one another. Those who understand this relation between two consecutive states of consciousness can see that the same relation holds between the two mental elements that are separated only by death.

## **Death-Bed Visions**

Consciousness in the new existence is of two kinds, viz., rebirth consciousness and the consciousness that occurs during the whole life. There are altogether nineteen kinds of rebirth consciousness, one in the lower worlds, nine in the sensual worlds of human beings and devas, five in rupa-Brahma world and four in arupa-Brahma worlds. As for the others that occur during the rest of life, they number thirty-two as

resultant mental states (vipaka-vinnana). These enumerations will be intelligible only to those who have studied Abhidhamma.

To a dying person, there appears the flashbacks of what he has done in life (kamma), the surrounding conditions associated with his kammic acts (kammanimitta) and the visions of his future life (gatinimitta). Kamma may assume the form of a flashback about the past or the hallucination about the present. A fisherman on his death-bed may talk as if he were catching fish or a man who has given much alms may think in his last hours that he is doing Dana. Many years ago, I led a group of pilgrims from Shwebo to visit pagodas in Mandalay and Rangoon. An old man in the group died shortly after our return to Shwebo. He died muttering the words that were reminiscent of his experience during the pilgrimage.

The dying man also has visions of the environment in which kammic deeds were done such as robes, monasteries, Bhikkhus, Buddha images, etc., in connection with his acts of Dana or weapons, places, victims in case of the murder he has committed.

Then he sees visions of what he will find in his afterlife. For example, he will see hell-fire, hell-guards, etc., if he is bound to land in hell; devas, mansions, etc., if he is to pass on to deva-worlds and so forth. Once a dying Brahmin was told by his friends that the vision of the flames which he saw indicated the Brahma-world. He believed them and died only to find himself in hell. False beliefs are indeed dangerous. It is said that some people tell their dying friends to visualize their acts of killing a cow for Dana, believing that such acts are beneficial.

## **The Story Of Mahadhammika Upasaka**

In the time of the Buddha, there were in Savatthi city five hundred Upasakas each with 500 followers. They all practiced the Dhamma. The eldest of them, Mahadhammika, the head of all Upasakas had seven sons and seven daughters who also lived up to the teaching of the Buddha. As he grew old, he became sick and weak. He invited the Bhikkhus to his house and while attending their recitation of the Dhamma, he saw the celestial chariot arriving to take him to the deva-world. He said to the devas, "Please wait."

The Bhikkhus stopped reciting as they thought that the dying man had told them to do so. His sons and daughters cried, believing that he was babbling for fear of death. After the Bhikkhus' departure, he came round, told the people around him to throw a garland of flowers up into the air. They did as they were told and lo! The garland remained hanging in the air. The Upasaka said that the garland indicated the position of the chariot from Susita heaven, and after advising his daughters and sons to do good deeds like him for rebirth in the deva-world; he died and landed in Susita. This is how the vision of deva-world appears to the good man on his deathbed. A layman in Moulmein said that just before he died he saw a very good pucca building. This, too, may be a vision of the deva-world. Some dying persons

who are to be reborn as human beings have visions of their would-be parents, residence and so forth. A Sayadaw in Moulmein was killed by robbers. Three years later a child from Mergui came to Moulmein and identified by name the Sayadaws with whom he said he had lived together in his previous life. He said that the robbers stabbed him when they did not get the money that he ran away to the jetty where he got into a boat, reached Mergui and dwelt in the home of his parents. The flight, journey by boat, etc., were perhaps visions of the Sayadaw's afterlife.

Flashbacks of kammic acts and visions of a future life occur even in cases of instant death. According to the commentary, they occur even when a fly on a bar of iron is crushed to pieces with a hammer. Today, there are nuclear weapons that can reduce a big city to ashes in a moment. From the Buddhist point of view, these weapons have appeared because of the evil kamma of their potential victims. Those who are killed by these bombs also see the flashbacks and visions. This may sound incredible to those who do not know the mechanism of the mind thoroughly but, it presents no difficulty to the yogi who contemplates the nama-rupa in action. For it is said in the scriptures that units of consciousness arise and pass away by the billions in the twinkling of an eye. The yogi who has attained udayabbaya insight knows empirically that hundreds of mental units arise and dissolve in a moment. So he has no doubt about the possibility of consciousness centering or flashbacks and visions in those who meet violent and instant death.

Consciousness is always focused on objects. We often recall what we have done and think of the deva-world or the human society. If a man who has done good deeds dies with these thoughts, he will be reborn as a deva or a human being. The objects of these thoughts on deathbed are called gatinimitta; visions of objects associated with kamma are called kammanimitta.

References to these deathbed phenomena are to be found not only in the commentaries, but also in the Pali Pitaka. In the Balapandita and other Suttas, the Buddha speaks of the death-bed memories of good or bad deeds and likens them to the shadows of a mountain dominating the plains in the evening. It is impossible to remove them. Once I saw a dying woman who showed great fear as if she were face to face with an enemy who was out to treat her cruelly. She was speechless and her relatives tried to comfort her but, it was in vain. Perhaps she was having a foretaste of her unhappy future as a result of evil kamma.

So it is necessary to do good kamma that will produce mental images of objects and persons associated with it and visions of a good afterlife at the moment of dying. If the good deed is rational, strongly motivated and one of the eight kinds of good deeds in sensual sphere, the resultant consciousness is one of the four kinds of rational vinnana. Rebirth is then associated with amoha (non-ignorance) and as such it takes place with three root-conditions (hetu) viz., amoha, adosa (non-aggressiveness) and alobha (non-craving). A person reborn with these innate tendencies can attain jhana and psychic powers if he practices samatha and can

attain the holy path and Nibbána if he devotes himself to vipassana. Good acts that are motivated by the desire for Nibbána lead to such good rebirth and finally to the path, and Nibbána through contemplation or hearing a sermon.

If the motivation is weak or if it is a good, but unenlightened deed, that is, a good deed divorced from the belief in kamma, the result is one of the four kinds of unenlightened (moha-vipaka) consciousness. The rebirth is then devoid of amoha (non-ignorance), there being only the other root-conditions, viz., alobha and adosa. It is termed “dvehetupatisandhika”. A man reborn in this way cannot attain jhanas or the Path as he lacks the innate intelligence for it. If the good deed is unenlightened and half-hearted, the result will be good rebirth consciousness without any good predispositions. The person concerned is likely to have defective eyes, ears, etc.

So when you do a good deed you should do it with zeal and with Nibbána as your objective. If you set your heart on Nibbána, the good deed will lead you to it and the zeal with which you do it will ensure rebirth with good predispositions. It is not necessary to pray for such noble rebirth because you are assured of it if you do good deeds intelligently and zealously. But, if you lack zeal in doing good, yours will be a rebirth with only alobha and adosa.

Some people say that Dana and síla mean good kamma-formations (punnabhisankhara) which, being rooted in ignorance, lead to rebirth and samsaric suffering. This is a mistaken view that stems from ignorance. If the practice of Dana and síla is motivated by the desire for Nibbána, it will ensure the noblest rebirth and lead to the supreme goal. It was due to Dana and síla that Shariputra and other disciples of the Buddha finally attained Nibbána. The same may be said of paccekabuddhas.

The bodhisattva, too, attained supreme enlightenment in the same way by praying that his good deeds contribute to the attainment of omniscience (sabbannutanana). Here rebirth with three good predispositions, viz., amoha, adosa and alobha involved in the genesis of Buddhahood is of two kinds, viz., consciousness associated with joy (somanassa) and consciousness associated with equanimity (upekkha). Again each of these two vinnanas is of two kinds, viz., asankharika (spontaneous) and sasankharika (non-spontaneous). The bodhisattva's rebirth consciousness was powerful, zealous asankharika.

According to ancient commentaries, it was somanassa consciousness. For the bodhisattva wanted very much to promote the welfare of all living beings, he had infinite mettá (good-will or loving-kindness) for them. A strong-willed mettá is usually coupled with somanassa and, hence, the bodhisattva's rebirth consciousness was tinged with joy.

But, Mahasiva thera suggested upekkha as its (bodhisattva's rebirth) concomitant. In his view, the bodhisattva's mind was firm and profound, thereby making

equanimity rather than joy the characteristic of his rebirth consciousness. In any event, this rebirth-vinnana had its origin in his good deed that was motivated by the desire for supreme enlightenment. Thus, although the enlightened good kamma-formations (sankhárá) lead to rebirth, it does not prolong samsaric existence; on the contrary it contributes to liberation from the life cycle.

Consciousness of any kind, whether it be rebirth consciousness or otherwise, is a matter of very short duration. It has only three points of time, viz., arising (“upada’), being (“thi’’) and passing away (“bhanga’). According to the commentaries, these mental units arise and pass away by the millions in the twinkling of an eye. The moment of each unit is so short that it does not last even the millionth part of a second.

After the cessation of rebirth-consciousness there follows the stream of sub consciousness (bhavanga) which flows ceaselessly unless it is interrupted by a different kind of consciousness called vithi, that is the kind of mental activity involved in seeing, hearing, and so forth. The stream of bhavanga lasts as long as there is life, its mainspring being sankhárá as in the case of rebirth consciousness. Its duration, too, depends mainly on sankhárá or kamma. It may be like a stone thrown into the air. The stone will travel a long way if the hand which throws it is strong, but it will not go very far if the hand is weak. The force of kamma may also be compared to the initial velocity of the bullet, rocket, and so forth. Death means the dissolution of the consciousness that is born of the same kammic force. Hence the initial rebirth consciousness, the stream of sub consciousness and the last dying (cuti) consciousness of an existence comprise the mental life that is wholly rooted in past kamma.

Also due the kamma or sankhárá are the five kinds of vithi consciousness, viz., those involved in seeing, hearing, smelling, eating and touching as well as the mental unit that focuses on the sense-objects, the consciousness that reflects (santirana-citta) and the consciousness that registers (tadarammana-citta) the objects of impulse-moments (javana). These have their roots in original kamma that leads to rebirth or other kinds of kamma.

The Abhidhamma pitaka attributes all kinds of consciousness, including wholesome, unwholesome and non-kammic or kiriya-citta to sankhárá. This view is reasonable since the kiriya-cittas, too, evolve from the bhavanga-citta that is rooted in sankhárá. But the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada specifically describes the three rounds (vatta) of defilements, kamma, kammic results and their cause-and-effect relationships. So it ascribes to sankhárá only the 32 types of mundane resultant cittas that stem from kamma vatta. Of these 32 cittas we have described 19 cittas that comprise rebirth, subconscious state and death of the other cittas. Of the other cittas some are wholesome according to the sankhárá.

In the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada, the first two factors i.e., avijja and sankhára are described as the causes in the past life, vinnana, nama-rupa, phassa and vedana as the consequences in the present life; tanha, upadana and bhava as the causes in the present life and jati and jaramarana (old age and death) as the consequences that will occur in the future life.

## Vinnana And Nama-Rupa

The doctrine says that vinnana gives rise to nama-rupa. This means that with the arising of rebirth consciousness there also arise mind and body. Rebirth consciousness is invariably coupled with feeling (vedana), perception (sañña), contact (phassa), volition (cetana), mental advertence (manasikara) and other elements of mind relating to the objects of deathbed visions of a person. Every citta is bound up with these mental elements. The high (tīhetu) rebirth of some Brahmas, devas and human beings also, involve the three noble predispositions of alobha, adosa and amoha; some devas and human beings have only alobha and adosa while the earth-bound devas and human beings with defective organs are totally devoid of noble predispositions. Their rebirth is a good ahetu-birth as distinct from the evil ahetu-rebirth of the denizens of the lower worlds who are also devoid of good inborn tendencies.

Rebirth may assume one of the three forms: rebirth in the mother's womb, rebirth generated in putridity (samsedaja) and rebirth as sudden and spontaneous emergence of the full-fledged physical body (opapatika). Rebirth in the mother's womb is of two kinds, viz., viviparous as in the case of human beings and quadrupeds emerging from the wombs with umbilical cords and oviparous as in the case of birds coming out of eggs. These living beings may differ in origin as they do in size and gestation or incubation period. We will leave it at that and now go on with the human rebirth as described in the commentaries.

With the arising of rebirth consciousness there occur simultaneously three kammaja-rupakalapa or thirty rupas. These are rupas that have their origin in kamma, viz., ten kaya-rupas, ten bhava-rupas and ten vatthu-rupas. The nine rupas, to wit, the solid, fluid, heat, motion, color, smell, taste, nutriment and life together with the kayapasada (body-essence), rupa form the ten kaya-rupas; bhava-rupa and the solid, etc., form the group of ten bhava-rupas. Bhava-rupa means two germinal rupas, one of manhood and the other for womanhood. With the maturation of these rupas the mental and physical characteristics of man and woman become differentiated, as is evident in the case of those who have undergone sex changes.

In the time of the Buddha Soreyya, the son of a merchant instantly turned into a woman for having wronged Mahakaccayana therā. All masculine features disappeared and gave way to those of the fair sex. He even gave birth to two children. It was only when he begged for forgiveness that he again became a man. Later on, he joined the holy order and died as an Arahat. It is somewhat like the case

of a man who develops canine mentality after having been bitten by a rabid dog. The sex freak who is neither a male nor a female has no bhava-rupa. He has only ten kaya-rupas and ten vatthu-rupas. Vatthu-rupas are the physical bases of rebirth, subconscious, death and other cittas. So at the moment of conception there is already the physical basis for rebirth consciousness. The three kalpas or thirty rupas form the kalala, which according to ancient Buddhist books, mark the beginning of life.

This embryonic rupa has the size of a little drop of butter-oil scum on a fine woolen thread. It is so small that it is invisible to the naked eye. It does not exist by itself. We should assume that it arises from the fusion of the semen (sukka) and blood (sanita) of the parents. If we reject this view, it will be hard to explain the child's resemblance to his parents in physical appearance. It is also said in the Suttas that the physical body is the product of the four primary elements and the parent's semen. Moreover, the Pitaka specifies three conditions necessary for conception, viz., the parents' intercourse, the menstrual discharge of the mother and the presence of something qualified to become an embryo. Thus, it is clear that according to the scriptures, the embryonic kalala has its origin in the fusion of parents' semen and blood.

The semen and blood dissociated from the parents are utuja (temperature-based) rupa but it is quite possible for utuja-rupa to assimilate kammaja (kamma-based) rupa. Modern doctors excise a lump of unhealthy tissue from the human body and replace it with healthy tissue. The graft is utuja-rupa when cut out from the body but, as it becomes one whole with the natural tissues there appears kayapasada or kammaja-rupa. There are also cases of transplanting a goat's intestine or a human eye in place of diseased organs. No doubt these transplants develop kammaja-rupas in the form of kayapasada and cakkhupasada. Likewise, we should assume that the three kammajakalapas are fused with utuja-rupas of semen and blood detached from parents.

According to Western biologists, it is the fusion of the mother's ovum and the father's spermatozoa that gradually develops and becomes a child. The original embryo is so small that it cannot be seen with the naked eye. The findings of these scientists fairly agree with what the Buddhist books say about conception. Without the help of microscope or other instruments, but purely by means of his intellect, the Buddha knew how life begins with three kalpas or thirty rupas as kalala on the basis of parents' semen and blood. This was the Buddha's teaching 2500 years ago and it was only during the last 300 years that Western scientists discovered the facts about conception after long investigation with microscopes. Their discoveries bear testimony to the Buddha's infinite intelligence. However, they are as yet unable to reveal the genesis of thirty rupas probably because the extremely subtle kammaja-rupas defy microscopic investigation.

Thus, the cetasika and kammaja-rupa are the nama-rupas born of rebirth consciousness. The kammaja-rupas are renewed at every thought-moment as are the utuja-rupas due to heat. From the arising of the first bhavanga-citta there also occur

cittaja-rupa (consciousness-based) rupas at the moment of the arising of citta. But, cittas that make us barely aware of seeing, etc., cannot cause rupa. So cittaja-rupas do not arise at the moment of the arising of the bare cittas. Thus, with the arising of the rebirth citta, there develop in due course all other kinds of citta, that is, cetasikas, e.g., feeling, etc., as well as all kinds of rupa, to wit, kammaja, utuja and cittaja-rupas. After a week, the kalala becomes turbid froth (abbuda), which turns into a lump of flesh after a week. This hardens into “ghana” in another week and in the fifth week there develops “pasakha” with four knobs for hands and legs and one big knob for head.

The Buddhist books do not describe in detail the development after the fifth week, but say that after 77 days the four pasada-rupas for seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting appear as do the ahara-rupas, the product of the nutriment in the mother's body. It is also said that the embryo has toe-nails, finger-nails, etc. The books do not go into further details as it is not necessary for the yogis to know them. Such knowledge is beneficial only to doctors.

## “Upapata” Rebirth

For heavenly beings like catumaharaja and others, as soon as the rebirth-citta arises, there also arise 70 rupas or seven different kalpas, viz., cakkhu, sota, ghana, jiva, kayabhava and vatthudasaka. Kalpas of the same kind are innumerable according to the size of the deva's eyes, ears, etc. There are no dasaka-kalapas, that is, ghana, jiva, kaya and bhava in the three first jhanic abodes, the three second jhanic abodes, the three third jhanic abodes, the vehapphala and suddhavasa abodes. The three dasakarupa-kalapas (cakkhu, sota and vatthu-dasaka) and one navaka-kalapa or a total of four different kalpas or 39 rupas arise simultaneously with rebirth-citta. Of these four kalpas, jivitanavaka-kalapa takes on the nature of kayadasaka. The body of the Brahma is pervaded by jivita and nine rupas as is the deva's body by kayadasaka-kalapa. Asannasatta Brahmas have no citta from the moment of rebirth. They have only jivitanavaka-kalapa which assume Brahmanic form. Being devoid of citta and cittaja-rupa, such a Brahma knows nothing and makes no movement. He is like a wooden statue. More wonderful than these Brahmas are arupa Brahmas who having no rupa live in arupa (immaterial) worlds for thousands of world-systems through the successive renewal of mind and its elements. These accounts do not admit of scientific investigation and they concern only the Buddha and holy men with psychic powers.

The denizens of hell and the petas who are forever burning and starving cannot be conceived in wombs nor can they arise from putrid matter. Because of their evil kamma they come into being by materialization. Like the aforementioned devas they develop seven kalpas or seventy rupas simultaneously. They usually do not have defective vision, hearing, etc., since they are doomed to suffering through sense-contact with evil objects.

## Sansedaja Beings

As the sansedaja beings are said to have their origin in putrid matter, they are likely to develop gradually. But, the Buddhist books refer to their full-fledged materialization if they do not have defective visions, etc. We cannot say which is true, development or materialization, as the kammaja-rupas cannot be subjected to scientific inquiry and so for the time being it is better to accept the view as stated in the scriptures. The development of kammaja and other rupas in sansedaja and upapata rebirths are generally like that in gabbhaseyyaka (womb) rebirth. The only difference is that in the case of the former beings, aharaja-rupas arise from the time they eat food or swallow their saliva.

## Vithi-Cittas

Vithi-cittas differ in kind from bhavanga-cittas. Bhavanga-citta resembles rebirth-citta in respect of objects and process. It is the stream of consciousness that follows rebirth-citta, having its root in kamma. It is focused on one of the three objects viz., kamma, kammanimitta or gatinimitta of the previous existence. It is not concerned with the objects in present life. It is the kind of mental state that we have when sound asleep. But there occur certain changes when we see, hear, smell, eat, have bodily contact or think and these changes in mental phenomena are called six vithi-cittas.

Suppose the visual form is reflected on the sensitive rupa of the eye (cakkhupasada), these rupas, each lasting only seventeen thought-moments, are renewed ceaselessly together with the visual objects and their mental images. A group of eye-rupas and a group of visual objects occur simultaneously. But, a rupa is not powerful at the moment of arising and so there is no contact between the eye and its object during the moment of bhavanga-citta. In other words, there is no reflection of the visual object on the eye. The bhavanga that passes away before such reflection is called atitabhavanga. Then another bhavanga-citta arises and reflection occurs. As a result, the bhavanga-citta is disrupted. Its attentiveness to its accustomed object wanes and it begins to consider the visual object. This is termed bhavangacalana or bhavanga in motion. Then another bhavanga takes its place but, it is so weak that with its cessation, the bhavanga stream is cut off. The mind becomes curious about the visual form that the eye sees. This inquiring mind is called avajjana-citta and there are five kinds of such cittas corresponding to five sense-organs. There follows the eye consciousness, and after its cessation, there arises the citta which receives and attends to the visual object.

Bhavanga is the resultant citta that stems from sankhára, as are eye-citta and the receiving citta. They are called vipaka (resultant) cittas. There are two kinds of vipaka-cittas, viz., good and bad according to good and bad sankhára. On the other hand avajjana-citta (mental advertence) is ethically neither good nor bad; it is not a

vipaka-citta either. It is termed kiriya-citta, which means mere action without any kammic effect, the kind of citta that is usually attributed to Arahats.

After the mind has received the visual object, it inquires about its quality, whether it is good, bad, etc., (santirana-citta). Then, there follows decision (vutthocitta), that it is good, etc. This leads to javana, which means seven impulse moments flashing seven times in succession. Javana occurs very quickly. It has speed and impetus that are absent in other factors of the consciousness process. It is associated with powerful mental factors, which may be good or bad such as lobha or alobha. No wonder that evil minds rush towards their objects speedily. Thus, greed makes us inclined to scramble for the desired object and seize it by force, and anger arouses in us the desire to rush and destroy its object blindly. Doubt, restlessness and ignorance, too, speedily associate themselves with their respective objects. The same may be said of good mental factors. Because of their frantic and impulsive nature, the sensual desires are also called kamajavana. After the seven impulse moments, there follow two tadarammana-citta moments. This citta is concerned with the object of javana and thus its function is to fulfill the lingering desire of its predecessor.

In the consciousness process the eye-vinnana is dependent on eye organ (cakkhu-pasada) that arises together with atitabhavanga. Other vinnanas are dependent on the heart (hadaya-vatthu) rupa that arises along with other cittas. The 14 cittas from avajjana to the second tadarammana are focused only on present objects. So these 14 cittas are vithi-cittas that differ in kind from bhavanga-cittas. In other words, they are active cittas. After the cessation of second tadarammana-citta that marks the end of the consciousness process, the mental life reverts to the sub consciousness (bhavanga) state that is something like sleep.

An analogy may throw some light on the process (vithi) of consciousness. A man is sleeping under a mango tree. A mango falls and he wakes up. Picking up the fruit, the man examines it. He smells it and knowing that it is ripe, he eats it. Then he thinks over its taste and falls asleep again. Here the bhavanga state with kamma, kamma-nimitta and gatinimitta as its objects is like the state of being asleep. Waking up with a start due to the fall of the mango may be like the rising and passing away of bhavanga-citta. Reflection after awaking is avajjana. Seeing the visual object is seeing the fruit. Santirana-citta is involved when the man examines the fruit. To conclude that it is ripe is vuttho-citta. Javana is like eating the fruit and tadarammana is like thinking over its taste. Reverting to bhavanga state is like falling asleep again.

If the visible object is not very clear, it appears on the eye-organ after the arising of atitabhavanga twice or thrice. In case of such objects the vithi process does not last till the emergence of tadarammana but ends in javana and sinks into bhavanga state.

If the visible object is still weaker, it is reflected only after the arising of atitabhavanga from five to nine times. The vithi process does not reach javana, but

ends after vuttho arises twice or thrice. The vithi that thus ends in vuttho is of great importance in the practice of vipassana. For the yogi who practices constant mindfulness does not seek or attend to defiling sense-objects. So reflection is slow, avajjana is weak, eye-consciousness is not clear, reception is not proper, inquiry is not effective and decision is indefinite. So after reflecting twice or thrice the mind relapses into bhavanga state. The object is not clear enough to defile the mind and the yogi becomes aware of anicca, dukkha and anattá of the phenomena. There is only bare awareness of seeing and the vithi process is wholly free from defilements.

The vithi process that we have outlined above for the eye equally applies to the ear, nose, tongue and body.

## **Manodvara Vithi**

The mind vithi is of three kinds according to the javana involved, viz., kammajavana, jhanajavana and maggaphalajavana. Here, what matters is vithi with kammajavana. While the bhavanga stream is flowing, there appear mental images of the sense-objects that one has experienced or, sometimes, those, which one has not experienced. Then bhavanga is disturbed and next time it is cut off. This is followed by reflection, which is somewhat like vuttho (decision) in the five sense organs. Like vuttho, reflection (avajjana) leads to javana, giving rise to agreeable or disagreeable emotions such as fear, anger, confusion, devotion, awe, pity and so forth. The impulses arising at the five sense organs are weak and they neither lead to good or bad rebirth nor produce much other effects. But the impulses in the mind are potent enough to determine the quality of rebirth and all other kammic results. So it is necessary to guard and control these impulses. After seven impulse-moments followed by two tadarammana-moments the mind sinks into bhavanga state.

Thus, the vithi process at manodvara involves one avajjana-moment, seven javana-moments and two tadarammana-moments. In the case of dim and indistinct objects, the mind skips tadarammana, passes through javana and reverts to bhavanga. If the object is very weak, the mind does not attain even javana but has two or three avajjana-moments. This is natural if we bear in mind the way we have to focus on mind-objects in vipassana practice. The only resultant citta in this mano-vithi is tadarammana, the other two being kiriya-citta, the citta that does not stem from sankhára.

## **Follow-Up Vithi**

The mind vithi may involve the review of the sense-objects after rising from bhavanga state in the wake of the vithi rooted in the respective sense-organs. Up to this vithi the mind has, as its object, only rupa in its ultimate sense (paramattharupa). It is not concerned with the conventional modes of usage, e.g. man, woman, etc. So at this moment the yogi is not misled by appearances for he is aware of ultimate reality. He should try to contemplate immediately after seeing, etc.

We, therefore, stress the importance of immediate and present moment as the yogi's focus of attention.

If after this kind of manovithi the yogi is unmindful, there arises another manovithi in connection with the visual object, etc. Then the sense-object becomes a specific object of attention in terms of conventional shape and form. This vithi is open to strong but unwholesome impulses. It gives way to another manovithi where the attention is focused on conventional designations such as man, woman, etc., thereby making it more susceptible to stronger evil impulses.

In the face of a strange, unfamiliar object, the vithi-process involves three stages, viz., seeing, reflection and cognizance of the form and substance in conventional terms. The vithi stops short of cognizing the conventional names. In the case of vithi that arises in connection with a conventional term, it involves hearing, reflection and cognizance of the conventional term, and awareness of the relevant form and substance.

## **From Vinnana Arises Nama-Rupa**

Because of rebirth consciousness there arise mental phenomena associated with it such as feeling, remembering, perception, reflection, etc., together with the three kalpas or thirty rupas. After the cessation of rebirth consciousness, cetasikas (mental factors) arise in the wake of every activity of vinnana and so do rupas conditioned by citta, kamma, utu (heat) and ahara (nutriment).

There is no doubt, about the close connection between citta and cetasika. When citta is active we feel, we remember, we think, there arise greed, anger, faith and so forth. Equally obvious are the physical phenomena that stem from cittas. We stand, sit, go or do anything that we wish to do. According to the commentary, this obvious fact gives ground for our knowledge that the rebirth consciousness at the moment of conception leads to three kalpas or thirty rupas. In fact, the arising of rebirth consciousness and rupa at the moment of conception takes place in a split second and as such it is invisible even to the divine eye. The divine eye may see what happens shortly before death and after rebirth, but it is only the Buddha's omniscience that sees death-citta and rebirth-citta directly. But, from what we know about the cause of physical phenomena, we can infer the arising of rupa from the rebirth-citta at the moment of conception.

Some physical phenomena have their origin not in citta but in kamma, utu (heat) and material food, but without citta they will have no life. A corpse is lifeless although it is composed of utuja-rupas. It is because of the contribution of citta that the rupas based on kamma, utu and nutriment exist and form a continuous stream of life. Once death supervenes, cutting off the stream of consciousness, the cetasikas and living rupas cease to exist. Hence, the teaching that nama-rupa is conditioned of vinnana.

Because of sankhára (good or bad kamma) there is an uninterrupted flow of vinnana in the new existence. Coupled with every citta is nama-rupa which arises ceaselessly. The duration of nama-rupa depends on citta. If citta lasts an hour, so does nama-rupa. If the stream of citta, flows for 100 years, we say that the life of nama-rupa is 100 years. In short, we should understand that life is only the continuum of ceaseless causal relationships between nama-rupa and vinnana.

To sum up what we have said so far. Avijja causes sankhára. Because of the ignorance of the four noble truths people exert effort (sankhára) to be happy. They think that they will be happy if they get what they want. But, the objects of their desire are impermanent and so they lead to suffering. Not knowing the truth about dukkha, they think, speak and do things for their welfare in the present life and hereafter. These kammic actions lead to rebirth consciousness in the lower or the higher worlds. Beginning with this rebirth consciousness, there is a stream of citta that flows continuously until death, and the nature of this mental life is determined by kamma. The physical body too is conditioned by kamma as well as by citta, utu (heat) and nutriment.

The physical phenomena as conditioned by citta are obvious for all our bodily and verbal actions such as moving, speaking, etc., are rooted in citta. The yogi has to practice mindfulness on the basis of these cittajarupas and it is important to know them empirically for himself. Hence, the Buddha's teaching in Mahasatipatthana Sutta: "The Bhikkhu knows that he walks when he walks and that he stands when he stands." According to the commentary, if we know experientially the dependence of cittajarupa on citta, we can know by inference the contribution of vinnana to kammajarupa, cittajarupa, utujarupa and aharajarupa. Hence, the teaching of Pattecasamuppada: Conditioned by vinnana, there arises nama-rupa.

The yogi cannot know empirically the rebirth-citta or for that matter any other citta in the past in its ultimate sense. All that he can know is the reality about consciousness as it is functioning at present and he can know this only if he is always mindful. If he focuses on present vinnana, he comes to know nama-rupa fairly well. For, if he notes "seeing, seeing" and knows the eye-consciousness, he also knows the nama-rupa that is bound up with it. Here, by eye-consciousness we mean not only the eye-vinnana but the whole mental process of seeing (cakkhudvara-vithi). The yogi notes it as a whole and not by piecemeal. Moreover, the vithi appears to the yogi as a single unit of consciousness. This way of introspection is in accord with Patisambhidamagga, which says: "The citta that focuses on rupa arises and passes away. The yogi then contemplates the dissolution of the citta that has watched the dissolution of the rupa."

In other words, when the rupa is manifest, the citta watches it; but since the citta has attained bhanga insight, it too sees impermanence in the rupa and dissolves away. The dissolving vipassana citta itself becomes the object of contemplation. This vipassana citta is not a simple citta; it is composed of at least avajjana and seven

impulse moments. But, these eight cittas cannot be watched one by one; the whole vithi is to be the object of attention.

Here, the eye-consciousness means the whole mental process (vithi) of seeing and it includes good or bad kamma and impulses. So attentiveness to it leads to awareness of vedana (feeling), sañña (perception), phassa (contact), manasikara (reflection), cetana (volition) and so forth. But, cetana is more apparent in connection with thinking. Thus, it comes into full play when at night we think of what we have to do the next day. It urges and agitates us and its function is unmistakable. The yogi who constantly watches his nama-rupa is aware of cetana in action whenever he speaks or moves any part of his body. For example, if while practicing mindfulness, you feel an itch you wish to get rid of, you note the desire and you feel as if you are being urged to remove the itch. It is cetana, which urges you to do and so it is manifest in your everyday action, speech and thinking.

In short, if you know the eye-consciousness through contemplation, you know the nama (mental) khandhas that are born of it as well as the rupas of the whole body that form its basis. This is in accordance with the teaching: "From vinnana there arises nama-rupa."

The same may be said of the consciousness in connection with hearing, etc., awareness of vinnana means awareness of all the nama-rupa that are bound up with it. The awareness of contact is based on pleasant and unpleasant sensations when these sensations are manifest; it is based on contact when motion and rigidity are manifest; when you note the desire to bend the arm, you know the volition (cetana) behind it.

When you contemplate the vinnana, which thinks, you know the nama-rupa that is coupled with it. When you find yourself committing something to memory, you know sañña; when you note your intention to do or speak something, you become aware of cetana; when you note your desire for something, you know that it is your lobha. When you note your irritation, you know that it is dosa; you know moha when you note your view of a being in terms of a permanent and happy individual. You know alobha when you know the lack of desire in you. Moreover, your intention to do or say something is followed by bodily behavior or verbal expression and so through contemplation, you become aware of vinnana-citta as the cause of rupas in the body.

Vinnana and nama-rupa are interdependent. Just as vinnana gives rise to nama-rupa, so also nama-rupa leads to vinnana. Nama-rupa contributes to vinnana by way of simultaneous arising (sahajatapaccaya) foundation (nissayapaccaya) and so forth. It is only through the contribution of all cetasikas collectively or the body (rupa) as the physical basis, etc., that vinnana comes into being.

Mahapadana Sutta tells us how the bodhisattva reflected on dependent origination just before he attained enlightenment. He found nama-rupa, six bases of mental activity, impression, feeling, craving, clinging and becoming (bhava) to be the links in the chain of causation leading to old age and death. Then it occurs to him that nama-rupa is conditioned by vinnana and vice-versa. The Sutta ascribes this statement about the correlation between vinnana and nama-rupa to Vipassi bodhisattva, but we should understand that it is a fact discovered by all bodhisattvas before they attained supreme enlightenment.

Although vinnana and nama-rupa are interdependent, the former is the determining factor and, hence, it is described as the cause of nama-rupa. In fact, when vinnana arises because of sankhára, its concomitant cetasikas as well as the rupas resulting from sankhára come into being at the same time. So vinnanas and nama-rupas arise together from the moment of rebirth. Moreover, vinnana and nama-rupa include the six ayatana (the six bases or sense-organs) as well as phassa (sense-contact) and vedana (feeling). But since vinnana is the cause of nama-rupa and nama-rupa the cause of salayatana and so forth, the Buddha says: Vinnana paccaya nama-rupa, etc., to distinguish between cause and effect. Likewise a verse in the Dhammapada describes the mind (mano or vinnana) as leading the cetasikas: manopubbangama Dhamma; if a person acts or speaks with an evil mind, suffering follows him as a result, just as the wheels of a cart follow the ox which draws it.

In point of fact citta and cetasikas arise together but, because of its predominant role, citta is described as leading the latter. If a man's mind is evil, he does evil deeds, utters evil words and harbors evil thoughts. These three kinds of kammās are sankhárās born of ignorance. They become potential for evil kammic effect. Every deed, speech or thought is accompanied by seven impulse-moments that flash forth several times. If the first impulse-moments are favorable, the kamma is productive in the present life; otherwise it becomes sterile. If one of the seven impulse-moments is favorable, it gives rise to kammic images or visions of afterlife on deathbed and produces kammic effect in the next life. Otherwise, it is sterile. As for the other five impulse-moments, they produce kammic effect from the third existence till the last existence (the existence when Nibbána is to be attained) under favorable circumstances. It becomes sterile only after the attainment of Nibbána.

Before the attainment of Nibbána its potential remains intact for innumerable lifetimes, ready to bear fruit when circumstances permit. It bears fruit in terms of suffering, both mental and physical, in the lower worlds. If by virtue of good kamma the person is reborn in the human world, he will be dogged by evil kamma and suffer regardless of his station in life.

## **The Story Of Cakkhupala Thera**

The Dhammapada verse that we have referred to was uttered by the Buddha in connection with the story of Cakkhupala thera. The thera was a physician in one of

his previous lives. He cured a blind woman and restored her sight. The woman had promised to serve him as his slave should she recover her sight. But, she did not keep her promise and lied that she was worse off than before. Seeing her trick, the physician gave her an eye-lotion that destroyed her eyes completely. For his evil kamma the man suffered in many lives and in his last existence he became Cakkhupala thera. He practiced meditation as instructed by the Buddha with 60 other monks at a forest retreat. He never lay down while meditating and soon he had an eye-infection. He refused to lie down to apply the eye-lotion and so the doctor gave up the attempt to cure him. Reminding himself of certain death, the thera redoubled his effort and at midnight he became blind and attained Arahatsip.

To an ordinary observer, the thera's blindness may appear to be the price that he had to pay for the over-exertion of his energy. But the main cause was the evil deed he had committed in his previous life as a doctor. Even if he had not practiced meditation, he might have become blind somehow or other. But the attainment of Arahatsip was an immense benefit that accrued to him from his overzealous and strenuous exertion.

There are two lessons that we can learn from the story of Cakkhupala thera. As an energetic monk, he continued to practice vipassana after he became an Arahata. As he paced on the ground while meditating, the insects that lay in his path were trampled to death. When the matter was brought to the notice of the Buddha, the Lord said that since the thera had no intention to kill the insects, he was free from any moral responsibility for their destruction.

So we should note that causing death without cetana or volition is not a kammic act and that the body of an Arahata has weight if he has no psychic power or, if despite his iddhi he walks without exercising it to control his weight. Some Buddhists have doubt about their moral purity when they cook vegetables or drink water that harbors microbes. They should, of course, remove living beings that they can see. But, they need not have qualms about the destruction of creatures that may be accidentally connected with their actions. Some Jains are said to feel guilty over the death of insects that rush against a burning lamp. Theirs is an extreme view and cetana (volition) as the keystone of moral problems in the context of kammic law is borne out by Moggaliputtatissa thera's verdict in his reply to king Ashoka.

## **The Thera's Verdict**

When king Ashoka supported the Buddha Dhamma lavishly, some heretics joined the Buddhist Sangha for material benefits. The true Bhikkhus refused to have anything to do with the bogus monks and for seven years the uposatha service fell into abeyance at the Ashokarama monastery in Pataliputta city. So king Ashoka sent a minister to see to it that the Bhikkhus perform the uposatha service. But the Bhikkhus refused to comply with the king's wish. They said that the uposatha service was to be performed only by the assembly of true Bhikkhus. If there

happened to be a morally impure monk in the assembly, he had to be admonished and penalized for any infraction of Vinaya rules. The Sangha held the service only when there was reason to believe in the purity of every member; and they did not meet for the service together with non-Bhikkhus. If they did so, they would be guilty of a serious offence.

The minister regarded this reply as defiance of the king's order and put the good monks to the sword. The king's younger brother, Tissa therā, escaped death because the minister recognized him just in time. On hearing the news the king was greatly shocked and he asked Moggaliputtatissa therā whether he was kammically responsible for the death of the Bhikkhus. The therā asked him whether he had intended to have the monks killed. When the king replied that he had no such intention, the therā said that he was free from kammic responsibility. The therā gave this verdict on the basis of the Buddha's saying, "Cetana (volitional act) is that which I call kamma." He also cited Tittihira jataka in which the bodhisattva, who was then a rishi, emphasized the primacy of cetana in the operation of the kammic law.

The story of Cakkhupala therā also shows that an Arahāt who has no psychic power has body-weight like ordinary people. This is evident in the death of insects that were trampled by the therā. During the last 15 years Burma has produced some holy men who are reputed to be Arahāts. Some women have reportedly tested their holiness by having flowers on their hands trodden by the holy men's feet. It is said that the flowers were not crushed and the hands not hurt. But an Arahāt who has no psychic power or who does not use it cannot avoid crushing a thing if he treads directly on it.

The reliable test of Arahātship is to see whether or not a person who claims or is credited with it has craving, love of pleasure, attachment, anger, depression, fear, anxiety, restlessness, the tendency to speak ill of others, the habit of laughing loudly, irreverence to the memory of the Buddha and so forth. If he has these moral weaknesses, he is certainly not free from greed, anger and ignorance. If a thorough inquiry does not reveal any sign of these weaknesses, we may assume that he possesses the admirable attributes of an Arahāt or at least the qualities of a holy man who is close to Arahātship.

## **Pure Thought And Happiness**

Just as an evil thought is followed by suffering, so also pure thought is followed by happiness. Those who think, speak and act with pure thought build up good kamma sankhārá. Good kammās invariably lead to happiness in the present life and hereafter. This was emphasized by the Buddha in the story of Matthakundali.

Matthakundali was the son of a Brahmin who never gave alms. When he became severely ill, his father left him to his fate as he did not want to spend any money for

his cure. He removed his dying son outside the house to prevent those who came to inquire after the patient from seeing his possessions.

On that very day at dawn the Buddha saw the dying boy with his divine eye. He knew how it would benefit many people spiritually if the boy saw him before his death. So, while going round for the collection of food with other Bhikkhus, the Lord passed by the Brahmin's house. At the sight of the Lord, the boy was filled with deep devotion and shortly after the Lord's departure he died and landed in Tavatimsa heaven.

Reviewing his past, he saw how devotion to the Buddha had led him to the deva-world and he saw too, his father mourning at the cemetery. As he wished to teach his father a lesson, he came to the cemetery and posing as a boy who resembled Matthakundali, he started crying. Questioned by the old Brahmin, he said that he needed a pair of wheels for his golden chariot and that he wanted the wheels to be made of the sun and the moon. The Brahmin pointed out the futility of his desire but the boy said that the objects of his desire were visible whereas the Brahmin was mourning for his dead son who could be seen no longer. He asked who was more foolish, he or the Brahmin. This brought the Brahmin to his senses. The deva revealed his identity and told him how adoration of the Buddha on his deathbed had benefited him. He urged his father to seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and observe the five precepts.

The Brahmin invited the Buddha and the Bhikkhus to morning meal at his house. There were present believers and non-believers alike at the feast. After the feast, the Brahmin asked the Lord whether there was anybody who had never heard the Dhamma, never offered food to the Bhikkhus and never kept Sabbath and yet attained the deva-world through his devotion to the Buddha. The Lord replied that there were many such people. At that moment Matthakundali deva arrived with his mansion. He told the Lord how his devotion on his deathbed had landed him in heaven. All the people were much impressed by the power of faith in the Buddha that had so immensely benefited the young man who did not care much for deeds before his death. Then the Buddha uttered the verse: "Manopubbangama Dhamma..." that we have explained before.

According to the Dhammapada commentary, the Brahmin and the deva attained the first stage on the holy path after hearing the verse. It is worthy of note that it was just the mere thought about the Buddha that led to the young man's rebirth in the deva-world. He did not seem to have any hope or desire for Nibbána. His rebirth as a deva was indeed devoid of intelligence but hearing a verse made him a sotápanna. These two verses from Dhammapada echo the Paticcasamuppada teaching that vinnana is conditioned by sankhárá. For the verses say that happiness or misery arises from kamma sankhárá, and in fact sukha or dukkha occurs together with vinnana. Again, vinnana implies the associated mental factors and its physical basis viz., rupa. Hence, the teaching that vinnana conditions nama-rupa.

## **Nama-Rupa and Salayatana**

Nama-rupa conditions salayatana. This is very profound and hard to understand. Here nama-rupa means the three cetasika khandhas while rupa refers to the four primary elements, the six physical rupas, jivita (life), rupa and nutriment (ahara-rupa).

Nama-rupa leads to salayatana or five physical sense-organs, viz., eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and consciousness. These ayatanas are the doors (avara) that lead to vithi process. In the immaterial world every citta-unit throughout the whole life is born of associated cetasika, but for ordinary persons this will remain bookish knowledge as it is to be understood only by Ariyas in the immaterial world.

Further, in any existence like human life that has both nama and rupa, every vipaka-citta that arises from the time of conception is also due to associated cetasika. Vipaka-citta means the kind of citta that barely sees, barely hears, etc., the pleasant or unpleasant objects. Here, the seeing citta cannot arise by itself for it pre-supposes manasikara that considers the visual object, phassa that contacts the object and cetana that strives to see it. The seeing citta can arise only when these concomitant cetasikas arise, collectively at the same time. This is conascence condition called sahajata accaya in Pali. Thus, a load that can be raised only by four men working together will not move up if the team leader tries to move it alone. Likewise, although vinnana is the mainspring of mental life it counts for little by itself. It can function only together with other mental factors.

Moreover, these associate cetasikas contribute to the five physical ayatanas, viz., eye, ear, etc., by conascence at the moment of rebirth. Of course at the time of conception there is only kaya or rupa. But in other kinds of rebirth that do not involve the mother's womb, there may be all the five ayatanas at the beginning. The conditioning of the ayatanas by vinnana and cetasikas at the moment of conception is hard to understand but we have to accept on the authority of the Buddha. At other times, vipaka as well as the non-vipaka cittas help to maintain the ayatanas. This is understandable since it is impossible for matter to exist without mind.

## **Rupa And Ayatana**

The rebirth consciousness arises on the basis of the heart (hadaya-vatthu). The mind ayatana has its basis in the eye, ear, etc. Thought and consciousness too have heart as their physical basis. All the secondary physical phenomena such as the eye, visual object, etc., depend on the four primary elements, viz., pathavi, apo (solidity, motion), etc. The five pasada-rupa, i.e. eye, ear, etc., are rooted in the primary elements and their kamma-based rupas in jivita (life-force) rupa. The five ayatana-rupas too depend on nutriment (ahara-rupa).

To sum up, citta-vinnana is conditioned by at least three mental factors, viz., manasikara, phassa and cetana. Sometimes there arise repeatedly greed, craving, anger, illusion, pride, doubt, restlessness, worry, envy, ill-will, anxiety, fear and so forth. All these mental states arise because of unwholesome cetasikas. Similarly, there often occur faith, piety, moral sense, non-attachment, compassion, sympathetic joy (Mudita), appreciation of the law of kamma, reflection on anicca, dukkha, anattá, and so forth. These mental states arise from wholesome cetasikas. Thus, the yogi realizes the dependence of vinnana on wholesome or unwholesome cetasikas, the eye-consciousness on the eye. So it is clear that the manayatana is dependent on nama-rupa.

The mind is also vital to the existence of living matter. So the five ayatanas that produce sense-organs are dependent on the mind. The sensitive sense-organs (pasada) cannot exist without their gross physical bases just as the reflecting mirror cannot exist without the gross matter of glass. So the eye presupposes the gross matter of solidity (pathavi), cohesion (apo), heat (tejo) and tenseness (vayo); in short, the ability to see depends on the gross physical body of the eye. The same may be said of the ability to hear, the ability to smell, etc. Further, we can maintain life uninterrupted only because of life-force (jivita-rupa) and nutriment. All these facts show how the five ayatana-rupas originate with nama-rupa.

The sixth ayatana viz., manayatana comprising thought, reflection, intention, etc., depends on wholesome or unwholesome mental states such as greed, faith and mental factors such as phassa (contact) as well as on its physical bases. It arises from its root viz., bhavanga that in turn forms the basis for the mind-process (manodvara-vithi).

## Summary:

To recapitulate: Seeing involves sensitive eye-organ and consciousness. The eye-organ depends on consciousness, life force, nutriment and physical base. The eye-consciousness depends on the eye-organ and the three mental factors of reflection, striving and contact. In short, the eye as well as the eye-consciousness depend on nama-rupa and the same may be said of other five ayatanas.

A thorough knowledge of the origin of the six ayatanas on the basis of nama-rupa is possible only for bodhisattvas. Among the Buddha's disciples, even Shariputra and Moggallana did not seem to understand it comprehensively before they attained sotápanna. For, it is said that the ascetic Upatissa who was later to become Shariputra theravāsa attained the first stage on the holy path on hearing the verse uttered by Assaji theravāsa.

The verse, ascribed to the Buddha, says that all phenomena (Dhammas) are the effects of certain other phenomena, which are the causes. The Buddha points out these causes and there is the cessation of the effects together with the causes.

Upatissa and his friend Kolita are said to have attained sotápanna after hearing this verse, but they could not have reflected deeply on the dependent origination in such a short space of time. One may fairly understand the Buddha's teaching on the doctrine according to one's intellectual capacity but, it is impossible to grasp all of it fully.

The commentary explains the verse in the context of the four noble truths, "All the Dhammas is the effect" refers to the truth of suffering as having its origin in craving. The cause in the gatha means craving as the cause of dukkha. So the gatha epitomizes the truth about suffering and its cause.

In those days there were many views about the soul (attá) viz., that the soul was immortal and passed onto another abode after death, that it was annihilated after the final dissolution of the body, that it was created by God, that it was infinite and so forth. The gatha recognizes only the existence of the cause and effect and denied the immortality or annihilation of the soul and this teaching afforded the two ascetics a special insight into the nature of life.

Visuddhimagga Mahatika identifies this gatha with the teaching on Paticcasamuppada. It refers to a Sutta in Samyutta Nikáya, which says, "If this cause arises, then that effect follows. If this cause ceases, then that effect is also ended. So avijja causes sankhárá, etc., so there is suffering. With the cessation of avijja there follows the cessation of sankhárá and so on until suffering becomes extinct." According to the Mahatika, the substance of this teaching is implicit in the aforementioned gatha, in regard to both the arising (anuloma) and cessation (patiloma) of dukkha.

Mahayana Pitaka describes this gatha as a Sutta that sums up the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada. Any writing of the gatha is said to be beneficial if it is enshrined in a cetiya (pagoda). No wonder that many of these writings are found in very ancient pagodas.

Both views in the commentary and Mahatika are plausible. For the first two noble truths imply Paticcasamuppada in respect of the arising of dukkha and its cause while the other two noble truths imply the doctrine in respect of the cessation of dukkha.

To sum up the causes and effects in the chain of causation: In the past life of a person, ignorance leads to acts, speech and thoughts and these sankhárás give rise to vinnana. Then there are five effects in the present life, viz., vinnana, nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana. These effects in turn become causes or in other words, they sow the seeds for future life, viz., craving, clinging and becoming (tanha, upadana and jati). As a result there are old age, death, grief and suffering in store for the future life.

Paticcasamuppada is profound and this is borne out by the Buddha's saying to Ānanda. Ānanda reflected on the doctrine from the beginning to the end and vice versa. To him it was very clear and it presented no difficulty. He approached the Buddha and said, "Lord, this Paticcasamuppada is indeed very profound. But, for me it seems so easy to understand." The Buddha chided him, saying, "You should not say like that, Ānanda."

According to the commentary, the Buddha's words imply a compliment as well as a reproach to Ānanda. The Buddha meant to say in effect, "Ānanda, you are highly intelligent and so it is easy for you to understand the doctrine, but do not think that it may be equally easy for other people to understand it."

Ānanda's ability to understand the doctrine was due to four factors, viz., the parami (perfections) that he had acquired in his previous lives, the instructions of his teachers, his wide knowledge and his attainment of the first stage on the holy path.

Long, long ago, Ānanda was prince Sumana, the brother of Padumuttara Buddha. As a provincial governor, he subdued an uprising successfully. The king was much pleased and told him to ask for any boon he desired. The prince asked for permission to serve the Buddha for three months during the lent. The king did not wish to grant this boon and so he said evasively that it was indeed hard to know the Buddha's mind, that he could do nothing if the Lord was reluctant to go to the prince's abode.

On the advice of the Bhikkhus, the prince requested a thera named Sumana to arrange for an interview with the Buddha. When he met the Buddha, he told the Lord how Sumana thera had done a thing that was beyond the power of other Bhikkhus. He asked what kind of good deeds a man should do to be so intimate with the Lord. The Buddha said that he could become like Sumana by practicing Dana and sīla. The prince requested the Lord to spend the lent in his city as he wished to do good deeds so that he might become a specially privileged thera like Sumana in the holy order of a future Buddha. Seeing that his visit there might benefit all and sundry, the Buddha said, "Sumana, the Buddha loves solitude," a saying that meant tacit acceptance of the invitation.

The prince then ordered over one hundred monasteries to be built along the route where the Buddha and the Sangha might rest comfortably at night. He bought a park and turned it into a magnificent monastery as well as other dwellings for the Buddha and numerous monks.

Then when all was ready, he sent word to his father and invited the Buddha to come to his city. The prince and his people welcomed the Buddha and his followers, and honoring them with flowers and scents, led them to the monastery. There the prince formally donated the monastery and the park to the Buddha.

After performing this act of Dana the prince summoned his wives and ministers and said, "The Buddha has come here out of compassion for us. The Buddhas do not care for material welfare. They care only for the practice of the Dhamma. I wish to honor the Buddha with practice so that he may be well pleased. I will observe the ten precepts and stay at the residence of the Buddha. You must feed and serve all the Arahats every day during the rains-retreat as I have done today."

## **The Buddha's Emphasis On Practice**

Incidentally there is a story illustrative of the importance the Buddha attached to the practice of the Dhamma. One day, the Buddha came out of the Jetavana monastery with the Bhikkhus to go on tour. King Kosala, the merchant Anathapindika and other lay disciples requested the Buddha not to go on tour, but it was in vain. The merchant was unhappy because he would not be able to hear the Buddha's teaching or to make offerings to the Lord and the Bhikkhus. His slave girl, Punna by name, said that she would ask the Buddha to come back. The merchant promised to free her from bondage if she could make the Buddha return to the monastery.

Then Punna followed the Buddha quickly and implored the Lord to come back. The Buddha asked her what she could do for him. She replied that she had nothing to offer, but that she would take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and observe the five precepts if the Lord spent the lent in Savatthi city. Saying, "Sadhu - well said", the Buddha blessed her and returned to Jetavana monastery.

The news spread and the merchant set Punna free and adopted her as his daughter. She was now free to do what she liked, free to shape her own destiny. For this reason and by virtue of her parami (kammic potential) in her previous lives, she joined the holy order. She practiced vipassana and when she developed insight into the impermanence of nama-rupa, the Buddha exhorted her thus: "My daughter, just as the moon is full and complete on the fifteenth day, so also you should practice vipassana to the end. When your vipassana insight is complete, you will attain the end of suffering."

After hearing this exhortation, Punna theri attained the last stage on the holy path and became an Arahant. The Buddha had of course foreseen Punna's destiny and it was his concern for her spiritual welfare that prompted him to cancel the projected tour and turn back in response to her appeal. This is an example of the high regard for the practice of Dhamma that Gotama Buddha had in common with other Buddhas.

So the prince observed the ten precepts and dwelt at the residence of the Buddha. He spent his time near Sumana thera, the special attendant and watched him serve the needs of the Buddha in a very intimate manner. Shortly before the end of the lent, he returned home, donated lavishly to the Sangha and, in his prayer to the Buddha, he

affirmed his desire to become an intimate attendant of a future Buddha. The Buddha blessed him and the prince developed paramis for innumerable lifetimes. The Jatakas refer to many lives, which he devoted to perfecting himself in collaboration with bodhisattva Gotama. Sometimes the bodhisattva was king and he was the king's minister or the bodhisattva was a human being and he happened to be a deva or Sakka. But their positions were often reversed. In some Jatakas they were brothers.

Thus they developed paramis close together through their long samsaric journey and in his last existence Ānanda was the nephew of king Shuddhodana. After spending the first lent near Benares, the Buddha went to Rajagaha and from there he proceeded to Kapilavatthu at the invitation of his father. When he left his native place, Ānanda and some Sakyan princes followed the Buddha and joined the holy order.

The parami (perfections), which Ānanda had acquired through many lifetimes made it possible for him to understand easily Paticcasamuppada that has baffled so many people. Moreover, Ānanda had received instructions from teachers. He had not only lived with his teachers but also learned and inquired about the meanings of the doctrine and memorized them. This kind of learning helped him to understand Paticcasamuppada. In fact, he attained the first stage of the holy path after having heard the sermon of the noted preacher, Punna thera. Ānanda paid a high tribute to Punna for his illuminating discourse. The substance of the discourse is as follows.

"Self-conceit arises from attachment to the body, feeling, memory, kamma-formations (sankhārá) and consciousness. It cannot arise without the five khandhas any more than the reflection of a man's face can appear in the absence of a mirror. The body, feeling, etc., are not permanent. Since they are not permanent, you should contemplate and realize that none of the five khandhas, whether in the past, present or future, internal or external, gross or subtle, good or bad, distant or near is yours, is you or is your ego."

"The well-informed disciple of the Buddha who thus contemplates and realizes truth is disillusioned with the five khandhas. He becomes detached and free. He knows that his mind is free, that he has done what is to be done, that he has nothing else to do for his freedom."

This was what Punna preached to Ānanda. As sotápanna, Ānanda realized the cause-and-effect relationships of Paticcasamuppada. He had this insight when he practiced vipassana. He knew that illusion, attachment, obsession, effort, rebirth, consciousness, etc., form the links in the chain of causation. Here, illusion or ignorance is avijja, attachment is tanha, obsession is upadana, and effort is kamma. So when it is said that kamma leads to rebirth, we should understand that rebirth is also conditioned by upadana, etc. So the past involves avijja, tanha, upadana and

kamma as causes. The yogi who realizes this through contemplation of nama-rupa is free from all doubts, which we cannot remove merely through learning and reflection.

As the best-informed disciple of the Buddha, Ānanda also gained recognition of the Teacher in matters of knowledge. He usually accompanied the Buddha on preaching tour and memorized all the discourses. He could repeat a discourse verbatim after he had once heard it. As for the Buddha's talks given in his absence, he learnt from others and memorized them. The Dhammas, which he had thus learnt by heart are said to number eighty four thousand.

Ānanda was well-known for his retentive memory and the commentary on Mahavedalla Sutta says that he could memorize hundreds of gathas in a short space of time. What with his wide knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha and his chief disciples, it is no wonder that the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada did not present much difficulty to him. Even today, given a thorough knowledge of the Pitaka, a man may understand the cause-and-effect relationship in the doctrine.

## **The Abstruseness Of The Doctrine**

Nevertheless, the doctrine is abstruse in terms of effects, causes, teaching, and empirical knowledge (pativedha).

In the first place it is very hard to understand sankhára, etc., as the results of avijja and other causes for most people mistake the suffering of nama-rupa for happiness. This is avijja and they do not know it as an illusion. They believe that it is their ego-entities that think, they do not know sankhára (effort) as an effect of avijja, but they think it is they themselves who make the effort. So it is hard to see good or bad deeds (kamma) as the effects of ignorance. More difficult to understand is the causal relation between this sankhára of the previous life and the rebirth consciousness of the present existence. Likewise, it is hard to understand that nama-rupa, salayatana, etc., are conditioned by vinnana, etc.

Equally incomprehensible are the causes involved in dependent origination for people believe that they shape their own destiny. Some say that they are created by God or Brahma while some insist that everything happens by chance. Most of them do not see avijja, etc., as the mainspring of their existence.

Again, some teachings of the Buddha on the doctrine begin with avijja and end with death. Some are set forth in reverse order. Some begin with the middle links in the chain and proceed to the beginning or to the end. These various versions of the doctrine add to the difficulty of understanding it.

In order to gain an insight into the doctrine, one has to practice vipassana and realize the facts of causal relationship empirically. This vipassana approach to the study of

Paticcasamuppada is by no means easy for the method must be right and one will have to practice it steadily and thoroughly.

In spite of these difficulties, the doctrine seemed clear to Ānanda because of his unusual qualifications, So the Buddha's words "Do not say like this, Ānanda" may be an implicit compliment to him, but according to the commentary, the Buddha's saying may be an indirect reproach to him. It may mean in effect, "Ānanda, you say that Paticcasamuppada is easy to understand. Then why did you become a sotāpanna only after hearing my teaching? Why have you not attained any stage higher than the first stage on the path? You should think of your shortcomings. You are my disciple with average, limited intelligence and what you say does not agree with my words. It is a saying that should not have been uttered by a close disciple like you. I have had to develop intelligence for aeons to know this doctrine and so you should not speak lightly of it."

Thus, after chiding Ānanda implicitly by a few words, the Buddha stressed the profundity of Paticcasamuppada. "Profound, Ānanda, is this dependent origination and profound does it appear. It is through not understanding and not penetrating this law that this world of living beings resemble a tangled ball of thread, a bird's thicket of sedge or reed, and that man does not escape from the lower states of existence, from the course of suffering, from the round of rebirths."

In other words, this law concerning the conditioning of vinnana, nama-rupa, etc., by avijja, sankhárá, etc., is very profound. So people do not know that there are only cause-and-effect relationships and that there is no permanent being. They believe that a living being exists in a permanent form from the time of inception; that there is a permanent entity behind the being that develops and grows up. Some hold that this core or soul of the being has many previous lives. All these illusions are due to ignorance of the reality underlying the dependent origination.

A living being's acts, words and thoughts are clearly due to ignorance of the four noble truths and dependent origination. Undeniably, good acts bear good fruits, bad acts bear bad fruits and everyone fares according to his deeds. So ignorance leads to karmas or sankhárás, which in turn give rise to rebirth, consciousness, etc. This fact is clear to an intelligent person.

Because of their inability to understand dependent origination, living beings remain mired in the round of rebirths, wandering ceaselessly from one existence to another. By and large, they land in the lower worlds and pass on to the deva-realms only occasionally by virtue of their good karma. When the good kammic effects run out, they revert to the lower worlds.

It is hard for the denizens of the lower worlds to pass on to the human or deva worlds for attainment of the higher planes of existence is possible only when a dying person has memories or visions of his good deeds and a good act is simply

unthinkable among the lower forms of life. Animals kill one another and the law of the jungle prevails in their world, leaving no room for love, pity and other spiritual values. They usually die stricken with pain and fear. So a lower being is very likely to be reborn in the lower worlds.

Because of the ignorance of dependent origination a living being is unable to free himself from the round of rebirth. He is like an ox yoked to the mortar. No matter how long it goes round and round, the animal cannot leave the strictly limited area of its mobility. Likewise, the ignorant person is mired in the life-cycle (samsara), which largely means confinement in the nether worlds and for aeons he remains subject to rebirth.

Understanding of Paticcasamuppada is as vital to spiritual liberation as the understanding of the four noble truths. In fact, the four noble truths are synonymous with the dependent origination. The object of vipassana practice is to gain insight both intellectually and empirically into these teachings, but these teachings are deep and hard to understand. Even in vipassana practice it is not easy to have clear ideas about avijja, sankhárá, etc.

The Buddha reflected on Paticcasamuppada before and shortly after his attainment of supreme enlightenment. For seven days the Buddha was absorbed in the peace of liberation (vimuttisukha) and on the seventh day at night, he contemplated Paticcasamuppada in terms of conditioning (paccaya) or cause-and-effect relationship.

Having dealt with the first links in the chain of causal sequence, we will now proceed to phassa that is conditioned by salayatana. Salayatana means the six sense-organs and the six sense-objects, viz., visual form, sound, smell, taste, tactile object and mind-object. The contact between a sense organ and the corresponding sense-object is called phassa. It is an intangible phenomenon of mental life but it shows itself clearly when the object has an unmistakable impact on the mind. For example, we are shocked when we see someone being ill-treated. It makes us tremble when we see a man whose life is hanging by a thread on the top of a tree. Seeing a ghost will send the shivers, down the spine. Hearing or reading an interesting story often leaves some impressions that may remain indelible for a long time. All these show what it means when there is phassa or the impact of a sense-object on the mind of a person.

The impact is occasionally very violent and gives rise to violent emotions and outbursts of passion, anger, etc. According to the commentary on Anguttara Nikáya, in the time of the ancient Sinhalese King Dutthagamani, a young monk happened to see a girl. The girl looked at him too and both of them were so much consumed with a burning desire that they died. Again an elderly monk became insane after looking unmindfully at the queen of King Mahanaga.

In Mudulakkhana jataka, the bodhisattva was a rishi (recluse) who went to the king's palace to have his meal. He went there by air as he had psychic powers. When the rishi appeared suddenly, the queen rose to her feet in a hurry and her garment slipped. The queen's seductive pose instantly aroused the long-dormant sexual desire of the rishi. He could not eat any food. His psychic powers having vanished, he walked back to his abode and there he lay, afflicted with the fires of lust and passion.

On learning what had happened, the king offered the queen to the rishi as he was confident of the holy man's ability to recover his higher self eventually. He secretly instructed the queen to do her best for the welfare of the rishi.

Taking the queen, the rishi left the king's palace. Once outside the gate the queen told him to go back and ask the king for a house. He was offered an old house but there he had to fetch a hatchet and a basket for the disposal of excreta and filth. Again and again, he had to go and ask the king for other things that he needed. Going to and fro and doing all household chores at the bidding of the queen, the rishi was dead tired but he did not come to his senses as he was still dominated by lust and passion.

After having done everything that he was told to do, he sat down near the queen to take a rest. Then she pulled his moustache with a jerk and said, "Are you not aware of your being a Samana (ascetic) whose object is to do away with passions and desires? Are you so much out of your senses?" This awakened the rishi to a sense of his blind folly and ignorance. After handing back the queen to the king, he went to the Himalayan forest, practiced vipassana and recovered his psychic power. On his death he attained the Brahma world.

The moral is that even a person of spiritual caliber like a bodhisattva could not escape the fires of defilements. The rishi might have casually seen the queen before but the impact was not violent enough to jolt his emotional life. It was the clear, vivid impressions of the queen's physical appearance that harassed and engulfed him with the fires of lust and passion for many days.

In Ummadanti jataka, King Sivi became almost crazy after seeing Ummadanti, the wife of his commander-in-chief. The woman was so famous for her beauty that the king sent his Brahmin advisers to see whether she had the qualities of a noble lady. But at the sight of the woman they were so much bewitched by her beauty that they lost self-control and made a mess of the feast given by their host. Disgusted by their disorderly behavior, Ummadanti had them hustled out of the house. Thereupon, the disgruntled Brahmins reported to the king that she was not qualified to be a queen. The king lost interest in her and she became the wife of the supreme commander. She was, however, determined to make things even with the king and so when he went round the city during a festival she showed her beauty and charms to the best of her ability.

The king was half beside himself with infatuation for the woman. Unable to sleep, he raved about her and gave vent to his blind passion in a gatha which says that if he were granted a boon by the king of devas, he would ask for an opportunity to sleep one or two nights with Ummadanti. The impact of a sense-object depends largely on the nature of the impression conveyed by the object. If the impression is vague and dim, it produces only mild feeling and craving, but much vedana, tanha, etc., follow in the wake of clear and vivid impressions.

The impact may also lead to outburst of temper. We show anger at the sight of an offensive object, and we fear a frightful object. Unpleasant words are irritating to us. Pride wells up in us when we think of something that boosts our ego. We hold wrong views when we toy with the idea of soul or with a teaching that makes a farce of kamma and its fruit. Objects of envy make us envious, and objects, which we wish to possess exclusively make us miserly. These are instances of phassa that fuel unwholesome kammass.

Wholesome kammass too arise from phassa. Objects of devotion arouse faith, those whom we should forgive or tolerate help to foster forbearance, and contemplation of the Buddha and the Arahats make us mindful, kindly and so forth. So Patisambhidamagga says: "Conditioned by phassa, there arise fifty cetasikas (mental factors)." It attributes feeling, perception and kamma-formations to phassa.

We see because of phassa and this phassa occurs because of the eye, the visual object and the visual consciousness. The Buddha's teaching makes a distinction between the visual consciousness and the visual object. Ordinary people tend to confuse the former with the latter, but the Buddha stated clearly that visual consciousness arises from the eye and the visual object, and that phassa means the conjunction of the eye, the visual object and the visual consciousness.

This is the impact of seeing for which the three ayatanas, viz., the eye, etc., form the three necessary and sufficient conditions. The nature of impact is realized empirically by the yogi who practices mindfulness. The yogi notes, "seeing, seeing" at every moment of seeing and as concentration develops, he comes to realize that seeing is not uncaused, that it is not made or created by a person; that it is a psycho-physical phenomenon, having the eye and the visual object as its cause and the visual consciousness as its effect.

The impact on the sense-organ leads to feelings that may be pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent according to the nature of the sense-object. If the object is beautiful, there arises pleasant feeling; if it is ugly, we have unpleasant feeling. If the object is neither ugly nor lovely, the feeling is indifferent. This feeling (upekkha vedana) does not give rise to any comment, whether favorable or unfavorable; indeed it is not even recognized as a feeling but it is accepted by the ego. In fact, these three kinds of feelings have nothing to do with the ego or self but are aspects of the mental process stemming from sense-contact.

To understand Paticcasamuppada means to be free from skepticism and illusion. Since this freedom is the essential attribute of the yogi at the first stage on the holy path, it is important to understand the doctrine. Ignorance of it tends to cause doubts about the Buddha, the Dhamma and so forth. There are eight kinds of doubts.

- (1) Doubt about the Buddha. This leads the skeptic to raise questions such as "Was the Buddha really a being who was free from all defilements? Or was he an ordinary man who commanded the blind faith of his followers?"
- (2) Doubt about the Teaching. "Are there the Path and Nibbána that really ensure the extinction of craving, hatred and ignorance?"
- (3) Doubt about the Sangha. "Are there Ariyas, the Noble ones who are really free from defilements? Sotápanna's who, having overcome illusion and doubt, will never be reborn in the lower worlds? Sakadagamis, who do not have much sensual desire and anger? Anagamis, who are wholly free from sensual desire and anger? Or the Arahats who have freed themselves from all defilements?"
- (4) Doubt about the practice. "Is the practice of morality or contemplation beneficial and helpful to the higher spiritual progress?"
- (5) Doubt about the past. "Did I exist in the past? Why and how did I exist in the past? What kind of person was I in my previous life? Did I originate with the moss or did I come into being spontaneously?"
- (6) Doubt about the future. "Will I exist after my death? What kind of person will I become in my next life?"
- (7) Doubt about both the past and the future. According to the sub-commentaries, this doubt refers to the present life that is between the past and the future of a man's life cycle. This interpretation agrees with the Pali text of Sutta Pitaka, which says: "Now there arises doubt as regards one's self in the present." Such doubt may raise questions such as, "Am I really myself? Does the ego exist or does it not exist? If the ego exists, what kind of being is it? Is it big or small? Why or how does the ego exist? Was it created or did it come into being spontaneously? From where did the ego come and where will it go after the final dissolution of the body?"

These questions show that there are five doubts about the past, five doubts about the future and six doubts about the present. The yogi overcomes all these doubts when he is free from all illusions about the self or ego (kankhavitarana-visuddhi).

- (8) The last subject that raises much doubt is the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada that emphasizes the primacy of cause-and-effect relationship in the world of living beings. Is effort really due to ignorance of the true Dhamma? Is rebirth really conditioned by kamma? Is it a fact that bad kamma is harmful and good kamma

beneficial to a future life? Is there really a cause for every phenomenon? Is everything the outcome of the combination of atoms and electrons by chance? These doubts center on causal links, e.g. avijja, sankhárá, etc., and resultant links, e.g. vinnana, rebirth, etc., in the chain of causal sequence as enunciated in the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada.

These doubts give rise to wrong views in the long run. The false beliefs that conflict with the dependent origination are rooted in these doubts. Speculations on the nature of life that are above one's intellectual level produce doubts in the beginning but eventually turn the skeptic into one who clings to illusions. Such skepticism and false views are due to ignorance of Paticcasamuppada. One who understands the teaching clearly harbors no doubt, let alone illusions.

In the final analysis, a living being is a compound of causes and effects as are non-living things like the earth, the sun, tree, etc. The law of causation governs the universe leaving no room for creation or spontaneous occurrence. Modern science provides overwhelming evidence for the absolute dependence of the non-living material world on the interplay of cause and effect. It tends to bear out the truth of the Buddha's teaching about the conditionality of everything in the world, whether it be life, mind or matter.

The Buddha laid emphasis on the conditioned nature of man's internal life. The teaching leaves out of account the external world of inanimate matter because the material world has no life-cycle and is not subject to rebirth and suffering. What matters most from the Buddhist point of view is the living being. If left to itself, the nama-rupa comprising the living being passes through innumerable lives and, for the most part, the individual suffers on the lower planes of existence, but if we understand the nama-rupa process and act wisely, we can make progress gradually on the way to liberation. Even if we are not yet liberated, we can achieve a better life and fare fairly well in the round of rebirths. A clear understanding of Paticcasamuppada is vital for it ensures complete extinction of defilements.

We have described ignorance as the cause of effort (sankhárá) and kammic effort as the cause of rebirth. It is necessary to say something more about the origin of rebirth consciousness. In a Sutta of Anguttara Nikáya, the Buddha likens the wholesome or unwholesome volitional (cetana) action (kamma) to a thriving field, consciousness (vinnana) to seeds, and craving (tanha) to water for irrigating the field. The planting of trees requires fields and nurseries. Likewise, rebirth consciousness presupposes arable land in the form of kamma, kamma gives rise to the potential for rebirth and although the former states of consciousness disappear, the rebirth potential remains bound up with the psyche. Like a budding plant, it does not materialize as yet but it is bound to become actual under favorable circumstances, just as a man who has committed a crime is a potential prisoner or a worker who has distinguished himself in a state factory is a potential winner of government reward for good service.

Furthermore, rebirth depends on wholesome or unwholesome consciousness no less than does a plant depend on seeds for its germination. The good or bad vinnanas arise and pass away, but they touch off a ceaseless flow of similar states of consciousness.

These states are the outcome of former kammic vinnanas just like the transformation of a snake's skin. The most vital of them is the death-bed consciousness centering on one's kamma or objects associated with it (kammanimitta) or visions of future life (gatinimitta). This encounter of a dying person with signs and visions is called upatthanasamangita which means the foreshadowing of the future life as conditioned by sankhára-kamma. In a sense, it marks the transition from dying consciousness to rebirth consciousness somewhat similar to the development of a plant from a seed to a sprout.

A seed needs water to turn into a plant. Without water or at least moisture from the air, it will remain sterile. In the same way, although kamma forms the basis for a future life, there is no rebirth in the absence of craving (tanha). So in the case of Arahats, although there are conditions for rebirth in terms of vinnana and the kamma that they have done as ordinary persons, the rebirth consciousness cannot arise because of the extinction of craving.

Tanha is inherent in non-Arahats and it is most powerful in common people. It makes the sense-objects pleasant, attractive and desirable. It creates the illusion of pleasure, happiness and hope. It likes what is good and makes happiness and prosperity the main object of life for mankind. Tanha motivates the kammic consciousness, which leads to other mental states. On the approach of death, these mental states give rise to signs and visions. The dying person delights in pleasant visions and he becomes lively and cheerful. This shows that his kammic seeds are beginning to sprout. He does not welcome unpleasant visions, but still these visions have something to do with himself and this self-attachment, too, leads to the germination of the kammic seed.

Therefore in the case of common people rebirth is conditioned by three factors, viz., kamma (action), cittavinnana that is linked to kammic consciousness and tanha. Kamma as the fertile soil for rebirth is evident in death-bed visions and signs, the germination of the seed is shown by the dying person's interest in these signs and visions and one's self. So after death there arises rebirth consciousness as conditioned by the mental state at the last moment of the previous life.

Rebirth consciousness brings into play nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa, vedana and their interrelations that concern the whole life. So in a sense, we may regard it as the seed of present existence. It is inextricably bound up with nama-rupa. All nama-rupa, whether in or out of the body, is suffering as they are subject to constant arising and passing away, but ignorance makes us blind to dukkha, creates illusion

and attachment and keeps us engaged in the pursuit of sense-objects. This preoccupation leads to the renewal of existence.

With rebirth consciousness as the basis of a new existence, there arise the physical body as its basis and the concomitant mental factors such as phassa, vedana, etc. When rebirth consciousness ceases, there follow other mental states in succession, which may touch off good or bad kammās such as greed, anger, contentment, forbearance, etc. These mental states in turn lead to physical actions such as sitting, standing, and so forth.

Hence the Buddha's teaching: "Cittena niyate loko..." a Pali verse which may be freely translated as: "The mind (thought, will, etc.) leads the world. It draws the world wherever it pleases. The whole world follows the mind." Here the world ('loka') refers to the world of living beings. The mind leads the living beings rightfully or wrongfully. The mind of a good man who develops faith, morality, etc., will lead him to do good deeds. It will make him hear the Dhamma and practice vipassana. It will land him on the higher planes of existence or bring him to the goal of Nibbāna. On the other hand, the mind of an evil man will lead him to seek sensual objects and do evil deeds. After death, it takes him to the lower worlds and makes him subject to much suffering.

This verse shows that all nama-rupas are dominated by the mind. It accords with the teaching of Paticcasamuppada that because of vinnana there arise psychophysical phenomena such as phassa, etc. We have already given an account of phassa arising from the eye and now a few words about the phassa of hearing. As in the case of seeing, hearing also involves three factors, viz., the ear, the sound and the ear-consciousness.

Hearing is impossible without the ear-organ and the sound. Scientists say that sound-waves travel at the rate of 1,100 feet per second. This is the natural speed of sound; the radio broadcast can carry it all over the world in a moment. When it comes into contact with the ear it is like the reflection in the mirror and the hearing occurs.

But, it is a mistake to believe that it is the original owner of the ear who hears. The sensitive organs of the ear are in a ceaseless flux; the rupas involved are forever arising and passing away. They are like the ever-changing waters of a flowing stream. It is the contact of sound waves with the stream of rupas that sparks the ear-consciousness. The consciousness occurs only for an instant and vanishes. This is followed by the citta that continues to focus on the sound, inquire it and decide. Each of these cittas occurs for a moment and vanishes. Then, there flash forth successively with much speed seven impulse-moments, after which there occur two thought-moments that focus on the sound.

Such is then the consciousness-process involved in hearing. Whenever we hear a sound, the ear-vinnana is renewed on the basis of the ear and the sound. So the yogi who practices mindfulness realizes that hearing is conditioned by the ear and the sound, that there is no person or being who hears. In fact the yogi is more aware of the causal relation in hearing than in seeing.

Thus, hearing means the conjunction of the ear, the sound and the ear-consciousness. The impact of the sound is phassa and it is quite clear to the meditating yogi. Some are so sensitive that when they hear a harsh sound, they feel like being attacked by a tremendous onrush of it towards the ear. Some may even be startled by the dropping of a leaf. The impact is evident when out of a variety of sounds that reach our ears we select and attend to the sound that we wish to hear. As for loud, harsh and piercing sounds, we cannot avoid hearing them. We may not look at an unpleasant object, but the sound cannot be so ignored.

We have pleasant or unpleasant feelings according to the pleasant or unpleasant sounds that we hear. Songs and sweet voices are welcome to the ear while harsh sounds and abusive words are odious to us. When we hear ordinary sounds, we have feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. In such cases we may not even be aware of our feeling, the upekkhavedana that is so subtle that it escapes our notice.

True, the Abhidhamma books deny that we have pleasant or unpleasant feeling when we have consciousness in connection with the eye, the ear, the nose or the tongue and describe it only as upekkhavedana. But for the contemplating yogi, it is not advisable to focus on eye-consciousness, etc. He should contemplate the whole process of consciousness (vithi), which involves pleasant feeling along with some thought-moments, e.g. santirana, javana and tadarammana and unpleasant feelings along with javana or impulse-moments.

Moreover, even though the eye-consciousness, etc., may be upekkhavedana at the moment of their arising, they will be accompanied by unpleasant feeling if they happen to be the effects of unwholesome kamma as is evident in our contact with unpleasant sense-objects that cause painful emotions such as fear. Loud noise may make us deaf, evil smells may cause headache while unwholesome food may do harm to our health. Likewise, the upekkhavedana that is conditioned by the four kinds of pleasant sense-objects implies pleasant feelings. We enjoy seeing beautiful objects, hearing pleasant sounds, etc. This shows the pleasant character of upekkhavedana because of its being the product of wholesome kammass. In this connection the sub-commentary on Visuddhimagga says:

"The upekkhavedana which, being the full-blown product of low kamma, is painful and as such, it is of low character." In other words, the upekkhavedana that is based on unwholesome kamma may be indifferent and neutral but, since it stems from evil kamma, it is low just like the flower that blooms in a heap of excreta. Moreover,

although it is not as worse as dukkhavedana, it is unbearable and so it is low. In fact, the kammic effect of a bad deed is never good or free from pain and suffering.

Then, elaborating the function of vedana in the chain of causation, the sub-commentary says: "The upekkhavedana that results from unwholesome kamma should be described as dukkha since it is undesirable. The upekkhavedana that has its origin in wholesome kamma should be described as sukha since it is desirable." It is evident in the pleasant feeling that we have when we hear a pleasant sound. Sweet words are welcome to the ear while harsh words jar on it. The nature of some feelings caused by ordinary sounds is not obvious and such feelings are termed upekkhavedana.

The three kinds of vedana due to hearing is distinctly familiar to the ever-mindful yogi. He knows that the dukkha or sukhavedana arises from contact between the sound and the ear; that there is no soul or attá to be affected by it; that the vedana arises and vanishes instantly, and that everything is impermanent. As his concentration develops, he becomes aware of the ceaseless arising and vanishing of all the three kinds of vedana.

Like hearing, smelling is also conditioned. The smelling consciousness arises from the contact between the nose and the odor. It is impossible to smell without the odor or the sensitive part of the nose (ghanapasada). People without sensitive nose are rare. Once I met a monk who said that he had practically no scent even when he smelled a handkerchief moistened with perfume. Even when the nose is sensitive you cannot have any scent if you plug it or if there is nothing to be scented. The scent is detected only when it is wafted in the air and comes into contact with the sensitive part of the nose. Ordinary people labor under the delusion that it is the person or the living being who smells. In fact it is the contact between the airborne scent and the rupas of the nose in continual flux that causes smelling consciousness. As in the case of seeing and hearing this ghana-vinnana is a process that involves advertence (avajjana), impulsion (javana), investigation and other stages. The crux of the matter is of course the smelling consciousness that ceaselessly arises and vanishes, depending on the nose and the smell.

We are all familiar with the offensive smell of something rotten or the fragrance of a flower. Common people believe that it is they who smell whereas the yogi knows that it is only a phenomenon arising from the conjunction of the nose, the odor and consciousness and he comes to realize the ceaseless influx and impermanence of everything. That is the difference between the yogi and the common people.

Vedana (feeling) may be agreeable or disagreeable according to the nature of impact (phassa). Scents of flowers and perfumes cause pleasant feelings whereas the stench of the decomposing matter is offensive to the nose. The ordinary smells cause neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings and this is upekkhavedana; a feeling that is so

subtle that we do not notice it. The yogi notes the smelling consciousness and becomes aware of the three kinds of feelings, and their arising and dissolution

Consciousness in eating (jivha-vinnana) arises from contact between the tongue and the food. Without the tongue or the flavor of food, there can be no consciousness of taste but, if the tongue is so unhealthy as to lack sensitivity, the food will be tasteless. Common people believe that it is a living being who eats and enjoys the flavor. In fact, the rupas forming the sensitive part of the tongue are forever in a flux and it is from the contact of these rupas and the flavor of food that there arises consciousness which involves the thought-moments that we have mentioned before. The events at this stage are so rapid that they seem to form a single thought moment. This consciousness (jivha-vinnana) changes at every moment, depending on the tongue and the flavor. It is this citta that knows sweetness, sourness, bitterness and so forth.

The conjunction of the tongue, the flavor and consciousness means what in Pali is called phassa. This is familiar to everybody, but common people think that it is they as living beings who experience the flavor. Only the yogi who notes all the psychophysical events that occur while he is eating knows it as a phenomenon dependent on the tongue, the flavor and consciousness. Later on, he gains a clear insight into its ceaseless flux and impermanence.

Contact with flavor is followed by sensations (vedana) that may be good or bad according to the flavor. Eating good food gives us pleasure, we like it, whereas we complain of bad food or the bitter taste of some medicine. The feeling that we have when we eat some food is indifferent. Although this is upekkhavedana, the opportunity to eat is the outcome of good kamma. Hence, eating such food also has a pleasant aspect and leads to attachment, but as for the yogi with developed samādhi who notes the nama-rupa at every moment; he becomes empirically aware of the arising of all sensations (pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent) and their passing away.

Another source of contact, feeling, etc., is the sensitive part of the body (kayadvara). It is said: "Body consciousness arises from the body or tactile organ and the tactile object. Body-impression (phassa) arises from the conjunction of the body, the tactile object and tactile consciousness, and the tactile impression conditions the (tactile) sensations (vedana)."

This needs some elaboration. Seeing, hearing, smelling and eating - each of these physical events concerns only its respective organ, viz., the eyes, etc. Consciousness in connection with them also arises only in a certain part of the head. These psychophysical events are restricted in terms of locality and duration. You are conscious of eating only when you are eating, conscious of hearing only when there is something to be heard. As for the body-consciousness, it is present in regard to every part of the body. You have tactile impression somewhere on your body at any time whenever you think of it. So its sphere is extensive and its duration is long. For

the beginner in vipassana practice, contemplation of tactile impression is most important and so the yogi should know something about it.

The fine, sensitive matter (rupa) that can receive the tactile impression pervades the whole body. It exists in every healthy part of the body and so it can give rise to tactile consciousness everywhere through contact with an external or internal rupa in the body. These rupas are impermanent and are in a flux from moment to moment. They are like the electric energy that passes into the bulb and gives light.

In this state of ceaseless flux the sensitive body rupa that has not yet passed away collides with an external or internal rupa, thereby giving rise to body-consciousness. As in the case of seeing, etc., this consciousness involves a series of thought-moments, viz., citta that inquires the tactile object, citta that knows, citta that registers etc., but these cittas arise and vanish so rapidly that the tactile consciousness appears to involve only a single thought-moment.

Body-consciousness is always present. It is not apparent when the mind is absorbed in any object other than the body but, if the attention is directed to the body, there is no doubt about the tactile impression somewhere as, for example, the contact between the body and the floor, the body and the clothes, and so forth.

So the yogi who practices mindfulness in regard to physical contact of his body is aware of its conditionality. He knows that it is neither uncaused nor created, that it in fact depends on the conjunction of tactile object and the sensitive rupa in healthy condition. The object of contact is called phoththappa in Pali and it is of three kinds, viz., pathavi, tejo and vayo.

Pathavi element has the attribute of hardness and coarseness and this attribute is to be found if one examines or focuses on a part of the body that gives a clear impression of contact. Softness too is to be regarded as pathavi for softness and coarseness do not differ essentially. We call velvet a smooth object in comparison with many things that are coarser than it but it appears to be rough when it hits the soft part of the human eye. So softness and roughness are relative terms that differ only in degree, not in kind. Softness and smoothness represent solidity that is a mark of pathavi element.

According to commentaries, solidity as the essence of pathavi element serves as the abode of other elements that have to depend on it just as all objects have to depend on earth. For example, rice-powder when mixed with water turns into a lump in which it may be termed pathavi because of its solidity or its predominantly solid character. The particles of powder are combined and held together by the water (apo) element. The lump also contains tejo element that is concerned with heat or cold, as well as the wind (vayo) element that supports stiffness and expansion. So this lump of rice powder contains all the four elements, and of these the element of solidity (pathavi) is the basis of other elements. All the other three elements are also

inherent in the rice powder. Thus, just as rice powder is the support of water element, etc., so also the earth element is the support of its associated rupas. This is the function of the earth element.

Thus, to the yogi, the earth-element appears to be the basis for its co-elements. This is its paccupatthana and so is of heaviness and lightness. In Dhammasangani, one of the books of Abhidhamma Pitaka and its commentary, the pathavi element is described as heavy and light. So when you move a thing and feel that it is heavy or light, that feeling or idea is to be included in the paccupatthana of the pathavi element. The yogi is aware of the characteristics of pathavi element through its roughness, softness or smoothness. He is aware of its function when he realizes that it serves as the basis of other rupas. He is aware of its paccupatthana when he knows that other rupas lie in the pathavi element, that it bears other rupas, that it is heavy or light. Such awareness of pathavi element in terms of characteristics (Lakkhana), function (Rasa) and paccupatthana means realization of truth and discriminative insight into the nature of nama-rupa.

As for the common people, contact with pathavi element is usually understood in terms of hands, legs, clothes, man and so forth. This way of thinking is wrong, but the yogi knows the truth through the practice of mindfulness.

Tejo element means heat. It is evident when we change the position of the body, because we feel heated and pressed in some part of the body. Coldness too is a kind of weak tejo element. A thing is hot or cold relative to other things. The shade of a tree may be cool in comparison with the heat of the sun, but it is hot relative to the interior of a cave or house. The water in the pot is cool relative to that in the open air but hot when compared to iced water. Hot, warm and cool are relative terms that mean essentially tejo dhatu (element).

Tejo or heat is essential to maturation and development. The function of heat is to make organisms mature and ripe. Old age and decay of trees, buildings, the earth, rocks, etc., are due to heat of the sun and it is the heat of the physical body that gives rise to gray hair, decaying teeth, wrinkled skin and other signs of senility. The greater the heat, the more rapid is the process of maturation. Tejo element makes the rupas soft and pliant. So as the yogi notes, "hot", "hot", he realizes its function, viz., to soften and loosen.

When heat or cold is manifest in the body, the mindful yogi is aware of tejo element in terms of its characteristics. He knows its function (Rasa) when he knows that it makes things soft and pliant. Thus, the yogi has discriminative insight into the nature of nama-rupa. He is free from the illusion that common people have when they think of tejo element in terms of substance and entity such as hand, man, woman and so forth.

Vayo element has the characteristics of stiffness and rigidity. If you sit erect and stretch your back and introspect yourself, you will find rigidity. Again, stretch your arm and fix your mind inside the hand. You will find stiffness there. So if you sit and note mentally, "sitting", you become aware of vayo element in terms of its characteristics. You know it not as ego, as atman, etc., but as stiffness and this insight into the real nature of vayo is important.

But initially the yogi's insight will not be necessarily confined to the reality of stiffness. Ideas of substance, self, and so forth, continue to obtrude upon his mind. For in the beginning, the average person's concentration is weak and he tends to let his mind wander freely. His mind is usually dominated by sensual desire and other hindrances (nivarana) that conflict with tranquility and insight-knowledge and impede their progress. As a result, the mind is not confined to the reality of elements. Some teachers would have us believe that all conventional notions go by the board at the outset, but this is impossible. It is indeed hard for any beginner to be free from hindrances and pure in mind and belief. Exceptions may be made in the case of those who heard the Dhamma right from the Buddha and attained the holy path, but such kind of attainment is unthinkable for other people.

Vipassana practice does not help to develop insight in the beginning. While contemplating nama-rupa, the yogi develops concentration strongly, thereby leaving almost no room for stray thoughts and keeps himself constantly mindful. It is only at this stage of mental purity that there arises the insight into the real nature of nama-rupa. Even so, conventional notions linger before the attainment of insight into the dissolution of all forms of existence (bhanganana). So it is said in Visuddhimagga that at the earlier stage of insight (udayabbayanana), the yogi tends to see "the lights, flowers on the pagoda platform or fishes and turtles in the sea." But later on, both the nama-rupa objects of contemplation and the contemplating mind are found to pass away one after another. Conventional ideas of shape, figure, etc., do not arise any longer. As Visuddhimagga says, "attention is fixed on cessation, disappearance and dissolution."

Therefore, initially the yogi knows only the object that he contemplates in the right way. Rigidity (vayo) is evident at the moment of lifting the foot, etc. To make us aware of this, the Buddha says, "When he (the yogi) walks, he knows that he is walking." Here, the yogi is instructed to be aware only of the fact that he is walking; he is not told to reflect on the vayo or rigidity. This means that names are not relevant, that what matters most is to see things as they really are, that the yogi can note them in terms of popular usage. Again, vayo element is manifest in the movement of any part of the body. Awareness of rigidity in such movement or in the abdominal rising and falling means awareness of the real marks of vayo element. Looseness too is a mark of vayo for we speak comparatively when we refer to tightness or looseness of anything.

It is also the function of vayo element to move, incline, tilt or displace. The yogi notes the motion of his hands when he bends them and becomes aware of the true nature of vayo element. He knows it also when he focuses on walking, etc. At such moments, he does not think of the object as man, woman, body and so forth. He is aware only of the gradual movement, which means the real nature of vayo element. He is also aware of something pushing or leading another from one place to the other. Thus, he knows vayo by means of the phenomenon that appears on his mental horizon. This is awareness by paccupatthana, which the scriptures describe as "Abhinhara paccupatthana" - the phenomena which appears as leading.

All the three primary elements - pathavi, tejo and vayo are to be known only by experience. You cannot know them by hearing, etc. You can hear the sound of something, but you cannot say whether it is coarse or soft, hot or cold, rigid, stable or moving. Neither will its smell, taste or visual form tell you anything about its primary quality. Yet, it is a popular belief that we can identify the primary elements by seeing.

No doubt a rock or a block of iron apparently gives us the impression of hardness, but this is not due to seeing. It is merely an inductive generalization based on past experience. What we know by seeing is only the visual form which sometimes gives a false impression as is evident when we tread on what we believe to be solid ground and stumble into a quagmire, or when we get burnt by handling a heated iron bar unknowingly.

Nor can we know vayo element by seeing for it is an element that we can know only empirically. We see that an object is moving because we see it here and there, and the idea of its motion is only an inference from our observation of its displacements. Yet, when one of the two trains at rest starts moving, the other train appears to be in motion and to a traveler in a fast moving train, the trees appear to be running in the opposite direction. These optical illusions bear out the fact that we cannot rely on our eyes for the truth about motion.

Once, an elderly layman who was interested in meditation told us about his dialogue with a monk-teacher. Taking a pillow and shaking it, he asked the monk, "Now, Sir, what Dhammas do you see passing away?"

"Well, I see the vayo element passing away."

"Sir, you are wrong. What you see with your eyes is only the visual form. If you are mindful at the moment of seeing, you know only what happens to the visual form. You cannot know empirically anything about vayo element at the moment of seeing. Vipassana is a practice that gives priority to what is to be known actually by introspection. It is only afterwards that other facts are to be noted and realized by reasoning. It is natural to contemplate each sense-object only through its respective sense-organ. Vayo is an object that is known only through body-contact. We can

know the motion of vayo if we introspect while walking, bending, etc. Now without being in contact with vayo, you say that you know its dissolution. What you say is unnatural and wrong."

There is much truth in my informant's criticism. Instead of relying on Satipathána and other Suttas for information, some teachers give purely speculative instructions on the basis of Abhidhamma books that deal with natural phenomena exclusively. There are yogis who practice according to these instructions. The practice may benefit them spiritually but they cannot rely on it for the attainment of real insight and stages on the holy path. The only exceptions are a few gifted yogis who gain insights through speculative introspection.

The best thing to do is to follow the Buddha's instruction in Satipathána Sutta and contemplate the psychophysical phenomena that arise from the six senses. This is, as the Buddha says, "eka yano maggo": "the only way". In the case of body-sense corresponding to body-consciousness we should note and recognize the body-impression when we are aware of any body-contact internally or externally. Otherwise the impression tends to dominate us in conjunction with avijja and other defilements. We tend to harbor illusions of permanence, happiness and ego-belief. Thus, through contact, we become attached to certain parts of the body, we consider them permanent and make distinctions according to our preferences. If we note every contact and realize their sensory, impermanent, unsatisfactory and insubstantial nature, there is no attachment and we are on the right path of vipassana that will certainly lead to enlightenment and Nibbána.

Body-sensitivity (kayapasada) is a quality that pervades the whole body when it is in a healthy condition. There are many things such as clothes, air and others that can give the body tactile impressions. The body, too, possesses many things, e.g. hair, skin, that lend themselves to contact. Thus, there are always both external and internal objects of contact for the body-sensitivity. Reflection will point clearly to the possibility of contact in every part of the body and there is no place, however small, that does not admit of contact, and this contact gives rise to body-consciousness.

From the conjunction of the body-sensitivity, object of contact and body-consciousness, there arises impression (phassa) that is very obvious. Pleasant impression of contact gives rise to pleasant feeling while unpleasant impression results in painful feeling. The deeper the impression the more intense is the feeling.

## **Relation between Manodvara And Vinnana, Etc**

Manovinnana that thinks conceives and cognizes has its origin in the mind and mind-objects. The mind, which forms its basis, is the bhavanga-citta that we have from the moment of conception. It occurs ceaselessly according to kamma. It is the basis for perception and cognition. When we sleep or when the mind is otherwise occupied, our mental life is all bhavanga-citta. It becomes active in the face of mind-

objects and there arise intention and cognition. So we can think and know only on the basis of bhavanga. True, this citta is always present in the absence of intention and cognition but bhavanga can lead to mental events only when it is strong.

At times we cannot think because we are drowsy or our thinking may be futile, in spite of our effort, and this is due to weakness of bhavanga. Thus, bhavanga by itself serves little purpose. It becomes active only when it is in contact with a new sense-object. Hence, it is called bhavangacalana, active bhavanga or bhavanga-paccheda, bhavanga with its stream cut off. This last bhavanga gives rise to intention and cognition. According to the commentaries, avajjana (advertence of the mind towards the object) is also to be considered the basis for mental activity. Avajjana forms the first stage in the consciousness-process. It arises as the inquiring state of mind in regard to the object. If it is alert and sharp, it is mindful of all the essential facts and objects.

The good writer considers the important facts for his book and the good speaker chooses appropriate words for his speech, thereby making their writings and speeches perfect. Further, this avajjana leads to good or bad kammic consciousness accordingly as it is bent on good or bad objectives. It is open to introspection and cognition since we can know actually that intention and awareness arise from avajjana. So the words: "mananja - mind as the basis" should be understood as reference also to avajjana.

Equally vital to mental activity is the mind-object. The object always arises when we reflect. In the absence of mind-objects mental activity is impossible. Thus, sometimes we wish to think but have to give up thinking because we cannot recall the essential facts or objects.

Hence, mental activity depends on the conjunction of the mind (bhavanga), inquiring mind (avajjana) and the mind-objects.

According to the commentaries, the heart forms the physical basis of all mental events. But today Western doctors have removed the diseased heart of a patient and replaced it with a good substitute. The experiment was not a complete success but the press reports say that the transplanted heart functioned for a few days. This news may raise doubts about the role of the heart in the mental life of mankind.

This question admits of two explanations. Although the heart is removed, its potency may not become extinct and bhavanga-citta may still linger in its place just like the tail of a house-lizard that moves after it has been cut off. Moreover, the bhavanga-citta may become active again when the transplant gets a new lease of life from the blood of the body, just as the new tissue or new eye ball that is engrafted has new sensitivity. Or, we can dispose of the question on the basis of Abhidhamma Pitaka, for Patthana, one of the Abhidhamma books, describes the physical basis of manovinnana (mind) simply as "that physical organ which conditions the mind as its

basis." It does not specifically mention any organ or part of the body. Thus, according to this canonical book, we may assume that a certain part of the body is the seat of the mind, perhaps it is a certain part of the heart or the head. Those who do not wish to locate the mind in the heart may regard the head as its physical basis.

Here, we must mention the analogy of the spider and the evolution of mind as set forth in the commentary on Abhidhamma Pitaka. The spider builds a web, which is a kind of net for catching flies. It can do so instinctively in a matter of days after its birth whereas by contrast even a year-old child can do nothing for himself. The spider waits in the center of its web, eats up any creature that gets entangled there and returns to its abode. In the same way, the bhavanga or mano-vinnana has the heart as its abode and like the threads of the spider's web connecting its abode and its surroundings, the blood pumped by the heart flows through the blood vessels and spreads all over the body. So the visual image in the eye stirs the bhavanga-citta in the heart and turns it into eye-consciousness and so on through its process (vithi). It (bhavanga) then turns back to its original seat. The same may be said of sound, smell, etc., with their respective sense organs.

It is now clear that bhavanga, together with its original activity, that is, thinking and knowing, forms the mainspring of our mental life. When there is a visual object, the eye-consciousness arises with the eye as its basis and then the manovinnana reflects on it. The same is true of the ear-consciousness, etc., with the ear, the nose and the tongue as their bases. As for the body-consciousness, its sphere is extensive as it depends on the size of the body.

When the sense-objects are not apparent, the mano-vinnana or the mind that comprises thinking and knowing holds sway over the mental life. Sometimes we are so much absorbed in thought that we remain unmindful of all sense-objects. Preoccupation with an important matter may even make us sleepless. We are then dominated by thoughts that arise ceaselessly one after another on the basis of mental activity as conditioned by bhavanga, avajjana and mind-objects. To the yogi who notes every thought as it arises, these thoughts will appear to arise and vanish separately in fragments.

Every mental event depends on the conjunction of mind, mind-object and cognition. This is followed by contact with mental images. These images, which may be real or unreal, existent or non-existent, are present in imagination whenever we think or intend to do something. This is familiar to those who have read, for example, the jataka stories. Reading these stories give rise to mental images of cities and kings that are colored by Burmese beliefs and traditions. They are far from historical truth for since the stories have their origin in India, people and places described in the Jatakas must have conformed to the Indian culture and way of life.

Modern novels evoke images of towns, villages, men, women, criminals and so forth. The reader knows that all these are purely fictitious and imaginary and yet

while he is reading, they appear as real and, hence, the delight, sorrow and other emotions that a good story arouses in him. All this is due to contact with mental images.

As the Buddha says in Brahmajala Sutta, "these teachings and beliefs stem from vivid imagination that makes them clear and real." In short, vivid imagination is necessary when we speak, write, hold a belief or think or just let the mind wander freely.

Imagination leads to feeling. Pleasant images cause pleasant feeling as do, for example, images related to our past affluence or the prospect of becoming affluent in future. On the other hand, unpleasant images make us unhappy. To think of the past suffering is to revive unpleasant memories and equally unpleasant is the anticipation of the troubles and arisings that might beset us in future. The cause of such unpleasantness may be purely imaginary as in the case of the people who grieved over the reported death of a relative only to learn later that he was still alive.

The image that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant will give rise to neutral (upekkha) feeling. We are then neither happy nor unhappy. Indeed we have the impression of having no feeling at all, but this indicates simply the subtle nature of upekkhavedana which, according to the commentaries., is to be known by the analogy of the tracks of the deer.

When a deer runs across a large rock, the track is lost since the animal leaves no footprints on it, but if the footprints are to be found on both sides of the rock, we conclude that the deer has run across the rock. Likewise, the yogi is well aware of the pleasant or unpleasant feelings. When he has upekkhavedana he does not notice it and is mindful only of seeing, hearing and so forth. But after that, he has again pleasant or unpleasant feeling and so he concludes that he has had neutral (upekkha) feeling while being mindful of ordinary mental events.

So the Buddha says: "Conditioned by the mind and mind-object manovinnana arises; the conjunction of mind, mind-object and manovinnana leads to sense-contact and, because of sense-contact, there is feeling."

This is purely a process of cause-and-effect relationship that has nothing to do with a being, ego, creator or any happening by chance. By the Pali word "Dhamma", the teaching refers to the five sense-objects as well as the imagined objects. The five sense-objects again become the focus of mental activity. So manovinnana involves all the six sense-objects that is, what one has seen, heard, etc., and what one has not seen, not heard, etc. Every sense-object leads to sense-contact which in turn gives rise to feeling.

For common people, these mental events are bound up with the idea of ego, self or attá. Such an idea is an illusion irrelevant to the chain of causation. This is empirically realized by the mindful yogi. He notes every mental event, traces its

cause and becomes aware of the bhavanga and avajjana as well as the mind-object. So he knows empirically that every mental event means only the interrelation of cause and effect, leaving no room for ego, creator or chance.

He knows too that mental activity leads to sense-contact which in turn gives rise to feeling. His knowledge is not bookish but empirical. He follows and notes every mental event. If his mind wanders to his home while he is meditating at a retreat, he directs his attention to it and there is the contact between his mind and its object, viz., the image of the house. In the same way, contacts with Shwedagon pagoda or a foreign country occur when he notes and follows the corresponding thoughts that distract his mind. This contact with mind-objects is phassa.

Equally clear to the yogi is the feeling that results from sense-contact. While practicing meditation, he feels delighted when he happens to think of something that pleases him; sorry when the thought about a sad event occurs to him; inclined to laugh when he thinks of something ludicrous. So he knows that feeling is merely the outcome of sense-contact. But the insight of the yogi who notes nama-rupa at every moment of their arising is deeper than this knowledge of the origin of feeling. For as he develops concentration and tranquility (samádhi), he finds that every object of his introspection as well as its subject, that is, consciousness, passes away. So he gains a clear insight into the impermanence of all mental events, viz., thinking, feeling, etc., their un-satisfactoriness and unreliability and their impersonal and insubstantial character. Such insight means the empirical realization and appreciation of the Paticcasamuppada or dependent origination.

## Recapitulation

In the first part of the discourse we have explained the links in the chain of causation up to the vedana (feeling), which arises from phassa (sense-contact). To sum up what we have said so far.

Avijja is ignorance of the four noble truths. It makes ordinary people blind to the impermanence and insubstantiality of sense-objects. So they think, speak and act in the hope of securing happiness in the present life or hereafter. These deeds in thought, word or bodily actions are either wholesome or unwholesome and they are also called sankhárás (kamma-formation).

The sankhárás give rise to new existence. The dying person has flashbacks of his kammic deeds and visions of future life that impress him and condition his new consciousness in a new life. In the absence of any special object that concerns the new consciousness, the latter occurs repeatedly with the death-bed impression of his previous life as its object.

This bhavanga-citta becomes active at the moment of seeing, etc. Then, there arises eye-consciousness that is dependent on the eye and visual form. It is part of the state

of consciousness, that is, the whole mental life as conditioned by sankhára. What we see, hear, etc., may be pleasant or unpleasant and the corresponding nature of eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc., is due to the ethical character of our past deeds, that is the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of the kammās in the past existence.

This applies to all of the six types of consciousness that arise from six sense-objects. The last type of consciousness, implicit in mental activity comprising thinking, imagining, willing, etc., is dependent on bhavanga-citta, avajjana-citta (mental advertence), the physical basis and the mental image. This mental activity (manovinnana) involves seven thought-moments (javana) and two other thought-moments (tadarammana). Here tadarammana is the product of good or bad kamma. Javana is not such a product, but in Abhidhamma it is labeled sankhára-based vinnana in that it arises from bhavanga, the product of sankhára.

Together with the arising of vinnana, there also arises other concomitant psycho-physical phenomena (cetasika and rupas). Thus vinnana leads to nama-rupa, but vinnana is followed also by the six ayatana (sense-organs) and six phassa (sense-impressions). Phassa means the conjunction of the mind, the mind-object and the sense organ. It gives rise to vedana (feeling) which may be pleasant or unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant. The last kind of feeling, which is called upekkhavedana, gives us the impression of the absence of any feeling, but according to Abhidhamma, it is in fact a kind of subtle pleasure that implies only the absence of unbearable pain.

## **Vedana Leads To Tanha**

Because of pleasant or unpleasant feeling, there arises tanha. Tanha means perpetual craving or hunger. It craves for sensual objects that it does not have or it craves for more of the objects that it already has. It knows no satiety or satisfaction. For all the sensual objects to gratify it, its hunger is insatiable.

So a deva said that devas are like petas in that just as the petas are very hungry because of lack of anything to eat or drink in their realm, so also devas are always hungry although they indulge in all kinds of sensual pleasure. This sounds quite plausible. For the life-span of a Tavatimsa deva means millions of years on earth and the life is still longer in other higher deva-worlds such as Yama, Nimmanarati. Yet, in spite of their ceaseless and fabulously lifelong enjoyment of pleasure, the devas are never satisfied because their tanha is insatiable.

The same is true of human beings. Poor people seek sensual pleasure to the best of their ability. Of course, because of their poverty, they can never fulfill all their desires but equally insatiable is the craving of the rich, the high officials and the upper crust of society. This is due to the nature of tanha. The more it is fed, the more

hungry it becomes and so it is worse among the rich than among the poor, more oppressive in wealthy countries than in poor countries.

## Six Kinds Of Tanha

Tanha is never tired of seeing pleasant objects, man or woman whom it likes. It seeks sweet sounds. It hungers for good scent, good food and good drinks. It craves for tactile sensation and this is surely the worst craving for people who love sensual pleasure. Tanha also means liking for mind-objects that are impervious to the eye, the ear and other physical organs. It is the object that we can know only mentally. According to the scriptures it means the five sensitive (pasada) rupas, the four subtle elements such as apo, etc., the mental elements (cetasikas) concepts of forms, qualities, names, etc.

People crave for good pasada-rupas because they want to see clearly, to hear distinctly, or to have keen sense of touch. They seek apo elements as they wish to keep their mouth, throat and skin moist. They delight in the consciousness of their own sex and the opposite and hence their craving for manhood and womanhood. They want to live long and to move lightly, and this desire shows their hunger for the fine rupas of jivita and kayalahuta, etc. Their desire for happiness, good memory and good intelligence points to their craving for certain mental faculties. Love of one's own physical appearance and that of the opposite sex as well as the desire for praise and fame again shows the hunger for concepts.

For six sense-objects there are six kinds of craving. These six cravings may mean merely the love of sensual pleasure (kamatanha). This love may be combined with the illusion of permanence (bhavatanha), tanha that implies the eternity-belief. Craving is also bound up with the belief in annihilation, which makes some people overly attached to sensual pleasure (vibhavatanha). So there are six cravings (corresponding to six sense-objects) for each of the three tanhas (kamatanha, bhavatanha and vibhavatanha) or 18 cravings. Each of these cravings may have internal objects or external objects and this leads to 36 kinds of craving. Since each craving may relate to the present, past or future, there are thus a total of 108 kinds of tanha. But all kinds of craving boil down to three kinds of tanha viz., kama-, bhava- and vibhava-tanhas.

People who are in contact with unpleasant sense-objects long for pleasant objects. Those who suffer pain seek freedom from it. In short, according to the commentary, the suffering person longs for happiness. People seek freedom from pain, poverty and unpleasant objects and feelings. Absence of suffering means happiness (sukha). We seek freedom from preoccupation with unpleasant thoughts, from worry about food, clothing and shelter. But, once a man is well provided with the necessities of life, he tends to develop other cravings. Says the commentary, "The wealthy man wants to increase his wealth." For it is in the nature of tanha to be insatiable. We wish to enjoy the good things of life repeatedly; we wish to increase our possessions.

The more we have, the more we want, and the higher the quality of life is, the greater is the desire to enhance it. Tanha never comes to an end for it is fuelled and perpetuated by vedana or feeling.

As regards the tanha associated with upekkha (neutral) feeling, the commentary describes the concomitant feeling as pleasant (sukha) because of its poise and subtlety. In the case of our contact with ordinary sense-objects, neither the pleasant feeling nor unpleasant feeling is apparent; but since this upekkha feeling is fine and subtle, it is tinged with (sukha) pleasantness and hence it makes us crave for more definite pleasure. It leads to discontentment with the ordinary sense-objects and kindles the desire for better food, better clothes, better sense-contact and better living conditions.

In short, pleasant sense-objects create attachment and craving for better objects. Unpleasant objects create the desire to be rid of them. When the sense-objects produce neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, we are still discontented with our lot and crave for better things. All these show how vedana gives rise to tanha.

## **Tanha And Samsara**

Simultaneously with the arising of consciousness at the moment of seeing, etc., there arise nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana. For every ordinary person who is not yet free from defilements, vedana (feeling) leads to tanha. Tanha in turn causes upadana (clinging) that makes him do a good or a bad deed (kammabhava). Under certain conditions, kammabhava gives rise to rebirth that makes living beings subject to old age, sickness, death, grief and all other mental and physical sufferings. This is how feelings lead to samsaric dukkha.

Nobody can prevent the arising of nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana as concomitants of vinnana. The Buddha and the Arahats, too, have pleasant, unpleasant or neutral (upekkha) feelings as a result of contact with sense-objects. They feel pain that arises from physical affliction but they do not suffer mentally; nor do they take delight in pleasant sensations. So they are free from craving and attachment. They do not strive for pleasure and happiness and because of their non-kammic way of life, they do away with rebirth, nama-rupa and other causes of suffering. This is the extinction of dukkha for the Arahats who are completely free from defilements.

So it is said, "Due to the complete extinction of tanha that is rooted in pleasant or unpleasant feeling on the Aryan path, there arises the extinction of upadana (clinging)."

Experience of the pleasant or unpleasant feelings make the non-Arahats crave for the good things of life but it has no effect on the person who has attained Arahatship after passing through the successive stages on the holy path. This may sound

incredible to the common people but in fact the most alluring sense-object has no appeal for the Arahant and he takes no interest in his welfare. He is, therefore, wholly free from craving and attachment and this means complete extinction of kammic effort, rebirth and its attendant suffering.

So it is said, "The extinction of upadana leads to the extinction of the cause of rebirth (kammic effort). The extinction of kammic effort leads to extinction of rebirth. Extinction of rebirth leads to extinction of old age, death, grief, etc."

## **Extinction Of Craving**

In short, with the complete extinction of tanha due to Arahantship, there is the complete extinction of all its consequences and this means the extinction of suffering. It does not imply the disappearance of happiness or a living being. It is simply the cessation of the nama-rupa process that is the source of dukkha.

Just as Arahantship means complete extinction of craving, the attainment of Anagami stage on the path means extinction of sensuous craving together with rebirth in the sensual world, old age, death, etc. At the sotapatti stage, the yogi is assured of extinction of all craving that may lead to the lower worlds or more than seven existences. So he is free from all suffering of the lower worlds and the suffering for more than seven lifetimes in the sensual world. Thus implicit in the Paticcasamuppada is the lessening of dukkha with the weakening of tanha.

Likewise, the vipassana insight ensures the momentary extinction of tanha. The arising of six sense-objects leads to pleasant or unpleasant feeling and in the absence of vipassana insight, it finally ends in tanha and its attendant suffering.

But as for the yogi who practices constant mindfulness and has developed vipassana insight, he finds only the arising and passing away of all phenomena, their impermanence, suffering and impersonality. He also finds that the pleasant or unpleasant feeling arises and passes away instantly. So he does not delight in the feeling that arises, he does not crave for another feeling; he is free from all craving.

Extinction of craving on the Aryan holy path differs from extinction by vipassana in that in the former case, the extinction is permanent and it concerns every sense-object whereas in the latter case extinction is neither permanent nor universal. Tanha is extinct only at the moment of contemplation and only in respect of the object contemplated. Hence, it is called "tadanga nibbuti", momentary or partial extinction of defilements.

The yogi who practices meditation is barely aware of seeing, hearing, etc. This state of bare awareness leaves no room for tanha and as a result upadana (clinging), kamma, rebirth, etc., cease to occur. In other words, with the cessation of tanha, the samsaric cycle is partly cut off and this is called tadanga nibbuti.

## **The Story Of Mahatissa Thera**

There is the story of Mahatissa thera in Sri Lanka who overcame tanha through the practice of both samatha and vipassana. One day he left his forest retreat early in the morning and on the way to Anuradha city for his begging round, he met a woman who had left her home after quarrelling with her husband. At the sight of the thera, there arose in her a lustful desire and she laughed aloud seductively. On looking at her the thera noticed her teeth. Since he had been contemplating the skeleton, the whole body of the woman appeared as a heap of bones. He concentrated on this mental image and attained jhana. Then, after contemplating the image of the skeleton in his jhanic state of mind, he attained Arahatsip.

The thera continued his journey and on the way met the woman's husband. The man asked him whether he had seen a woman. The thera replied that he did see something but that he did not know whether it was a man or a woman. All that he noticed was a skeleton that passed him on the way.

What he actually saw was the woman's teeth, but his practice of contemplation had turned his impression of her body into the image of a skeleton. Hence, in his mind there was no room for lust or any other defilement arising from his sense-contact with the woman. Then practising vipassana on the basis of his jhanic consciousness, he became free from defilements and attained Arahatsip.

This story might raise doubts among non-meditating people as regards the arising of the image of a skeleton at the sight of a person's teeth, but without practice one cannot have any clear idea of what mind training (bhávaná) can accomplish. The mere exercise of concentration without any training cannot help to create mental images for these depend on steadfast and prolonged practice of contemplation. Imagination is the power of perception. Repeated contemplation strengthens perception, which then helps create any kind of image of oneself or other people. This faculty of mind is possible even for a parrot as is borne out by a story in the commentary on Satipatthána Sutta.

## **Story Of A Parrot**

A dancer put up for the night at the residence of Bhikkhunis and when she went away, she left an intelligent parrot. The bird was cared for by the novitiates and it was called Buddha-rakkhita. The abbess of the nunnery thought that it would be good if there was something to contemplate for the bird living among the spiritual aspirants. So she taught her to contemplate "atthi: skeleton".

One morning the parrot was swooped up by an eagle. In the wake of the hue and cry raised by the young nuns, the eagle became frightened and dropped the parrot. The Abbess asked it what it contemplated when it was seized by the eagle. The bird replied, "I thought of a skeleton being carried off and I wondered where it would be

scattered." The Abbess said "Well done! This contemplation will contribute to your liberation from samsaric existence."

A thing that is repeatedly contemplated will become fixed in the long run. Since even a parrot can imagine a skeleton, there is no reason why a human being cannot do likewise. The parrot imagined itself as well as others to be skeletons. Because of this contemplation, it had no fear, anger or worry when it was taken away by the eagle.

So Satipatthána bhávaná is extolled as a practice that helps to overcome grief and anxiety and to bring about the extinction of mental and physical suffering. But there may be many people who are not as wise as the parrot in the story since they never take interest in the Dhamma and contemplate it. The yogi should resolve to surpass the parrot in the practice of vipassana.

If Mahatissa therā had failed to regard the laughing woman as a skeleton, he might have become lustful and fallen a victim to temptation in the solitude of the forest. Even if he had no sexual desire at that time, any impression of the woman would have laid him open to temptation at other times. But thanks to his contemplation of the skeleton in the practice of vipassana, he overcame defilements and achieved final liberation from samsaric existence. Here, the extinction of tanha through vipassana practice is called tadanga nibbuti, partial extinction, while extinction through Arahatship is called "total extinction".

## **Contemplation And Extinction**

So with the total extinction of tanha that results from vedana, there is the extinction of upadana, which means the extinction of all the consequences of craving. Contemplation of anicca, dukkha and anattá ensures the partial extinction of tanha, upadana, kamma, rebirth, etc. The object of vipassana practice is to put an end to defilements and samsaric suffering. So it is a matter of paramount importance that deserves the attention of everyone who seeks total liberation. Without this practice, pleasant or unpleasant feeling at every moment of seeing, etc., is bound to lead to craving, kamma and rebirth.

The consciousness involved in every moment of seeing is due to avijja and sankhárá in the previous existence. Seeing occurs together with vinnana, nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana. The scriptures treat each of these Dhammas separately in terms of their causal relations, but in fact they do not arise separately one after another. If vinnana arises from sankhárá, it arises together with its respective nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana. All of these Dhammas are the results of the past kamma sankhárá. They are termed vipaka-vatta, which means round or cycle of resultants. The round of defilements viz., ignorance, craving and clinging produce round of kamma viz., kamma and sankhárá which leads to round of resultants viz.,

consciousness, nama-rupa, sense-organs, contact, feeling which again give rise to the round of defilements.

The arising of these five resultants at the moment of seeing means to most people simply just seeing. In fact, seeing is the product of vinnana, nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana as are other psychophysical events such as hearing, smelling and so forth.

Seeing involves consciousness together with mental advertence (manasikara), volition (cetana), etc., plus the eye-organ, which comprises the nama-rupa. It also involves four ayatanas viz., eye sensitivity, visual object, eye consciousness and mental advertence (dhammayatana). Contact with the visual object is phassa and the pleasantness or unpleasantness that the object causes is vedana. Hence all the five resultants are bound up with every moment of seeing. The same may be said of other phenomena that arise from hearing, smelling and so forth.

## **Cutting Off At The Foundation**

These five psychophysical resultants or phenomena occur ceaselessly one after another and comprise what we call man, deva or living being. These are conventional terms that refer in fact to the collection of the five nama-rupa elements. There is no solid, monolithic and permanent being. The only reality is the arising and passing away of nama-rupa and for the mindful yogi, this insight means the extinction of craving, clinging, kamma, rebirth, suffering - a chain of consequences that might result from feeling in the case of common people.

This is the way to the cessation of the wheel of life (Paticcasamuppada) through the elimination of its key link viz., tanha as conditioned by feeling. In order to prevent tanha from arising as the result of vedana, at every moment of seeing the yogi should focus on every phenomenon that arises from six senses. Here, the most obvious of these sense contacts is the tactile sensation that concerns gross primary elements (Mahabhuta) and it is necessary for the beginner to start contemplation with it.

This way is in accord with the Buddha's teaching in Satipatthána Sutta, "Gacchanto va gacchamiti pajanati: (the yogi) knows that he is walking when he walks." How does he know it? He knows it as he notes mentally "walking, walking". He practices mindfulness, too, when he stands, lies, bends his arms, or does anything else. When there is no bodily action or movement to be noted, he should direct his attention to the abdominal rising and falling. He should also note any thought, or mental activity and any feeling that may arise in him. In short, he must be mindful of all the psychophysical phenomena that arise from the six senses. As concentration develops, such mindfulness leads to insight into anicca, dukkha and anattá, an insight that leaves no room for craving. With the extinction of craving, there is also an end to clinging, and rebirth with all its attendant suffering. This is the way to the

cessation of samsaric existence or life cycle through the elimination of its root cause, namely, craving.

Today, science and technology have created machines, which we cannot run or stop running without a knowledge of their modus operandi. Those who know the secret can operate them by manipulating their key plugs. In the same way, the keynote of the life-cycle as described by the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada is that tanha is caused by vedana, but this is true only if vedana is coupled with two kinds of latent tendencies (anusaya) viz., Santananusaya and arammananusaya. The Arahats are free from these tendencies and so, although they have feelings, their craving is extinct. This extinction of craving leaves no room for new kamma, neutralizes old kamma, and there is no more rebirth after their parinibbána.

But ordinary people have potential defilements, which means not the existence of evil desires lying latent somewhere but only the possibility of their arising under certain circumstances. Hence, the Pali term santananusaya kilesa for this tendency. This potential kilesa may become greed, hatred, ignorance and other evils in the case of those who fail to contemplate the nama-rupas and so become subject to the illusions of permanency, happiness and ego-entity. This kilesa, which may arise from sense-objects in the absence of vipassana insight, is called arammananusaya kilesa.

## **Kilesa And Un-mindfulness**

Greed and anger that arise in connection with what one has seen or heard are the manifestations of the second kind of latent tendency. The impressions that we retain are those of permanent, lovely or repulsive beings or things. So recall of those images gives rise to attachment (lobha), anger (dosa) or illusion of permanency (moha).

Lobha is another synonym for tanha. It is due to pleasant feeling but it may also arise when unpleasant feeling makes us crave for pleasant sensations. Ignorance, too, leads to complacency, attachment and craving. Thus lobha, dosa and moha give rise to feeling which in turn causes craving with its attendant sufferings of samsaric existence. It is only the practice in bare awareness of seeing, hearing, etc., that rules out the possibility of craving and nostalgia for the pleasant sensations from the senses. Without this practice, craving dominates us and leads to suffering in afterlife as well as here and now.

In the Mora jataka, the bodhisattva who was then a peacock used to utter a gatha when he arose in the morning and when he went to sleep in the evening. So for 700 years he escaped the trap set by a hunter. Then the hunter employed a peahen as a decoy and enticed by her, the peacock forgot to recite the gatha and fell into the trap. In Benares, there was a harpist called Guttila. He made love to a girl but he was ridiculed and rejected. So at night he sang a very sweet song and played his harp in

front of the girl's house. Fascinated by the music, the girl rushed out blindly, stumbled and fell to her death. In the Mora jataka it was the female voice, and here it was the male voice that brought about suffering and death.

No one can deny that what we hear is impermanent. Everything that we hear vanishes instantly, yet we enjoy songs and music because of their apparent continuity. If we note every sound, "hearing, hearing" mentally, our realization of their impermanence makes it impossible for our pleasant feelings to become cravings. This means non-arising of upadana and all its resultant suffering.

Smell is seldom experienced by the yogi. He must, of course, note it and see that it does not give rise to craving.

Mindfulness is especially important in eating. The unmindful person delights in eating good food. He is fond of such pleasure; he craves for it in future and hereafter. This craving for good food and drinks is powerful. It may lead to an existence that makes a person subsist on bad food. Thus, according to the Balapandita Sutta, those who do misdeeds for the pleasure of good food are reborn as animals that eat grass, leaves or human excreta.

Eating bad food also tends to create the desire for good food. Therefore, it is necessary for the yogi to note everything, every movement of his hand and mouth and every sensation when he is eating. Through this practice of mindfulness he becomes aware of the vanishing of his actions, sensations and feeling. In this way he gains an insight into impermanence of everything, an insight that leads to the extinction of craving and its attendant suffering.

## **Thoughts And Tactile Impressions**

Tactile impression is always present all over the physical body. Thinking, too, is also present all the time except when the yogi goes to sleep. So thoughts and tactile impressions form the objects of vipassana practice for most of the time. The yogi contemplates the tactile impressions when he has nothing else to engage his attention.

He notes his thoughts even though they happen to be unpleasant and undesirable. The beginner in meditation is often subject to such distractions, but they usually disappear as he gains practice and develops concentration. Thoughts about the Dhamma occur to some yogis from time to time and these should be noted. Introspection of these thoughts also ensures insight into impermanence and the extinction of suffering.

Here, some may wonder what this description of vipassana practice has to do with the discourse on Paticcasamuppada. The doctrine points out the chain of consequences as conditioned by their respective causes and our object is to show the

way to the end of samsaric suffering that finally results from the interplay of their causes and consequences. So we have to describe the practice wherever it is relevant. Thus, when it is said that "avijja leads to sankhára and sankhára to rebirth", we have to show the way to remove avijja. So also in connection with vinnana, etc., that finally bring about dukkha, it is necessary to stress the need for removing the link between vedana and tanha that is the main cause of dukkha.

## **Three Kinds Of Craving (Tanha)**

If feeling (vedana) that arises from contact with sense-objects is not rightly contemplated, it leads to one of the three kinds of craving viz., craving for sensual pleasure, craving for existence and craving for non-existence.

The first kind of craving (kamatanha) is focused on sensual objects and it is most prevalent among the living beings of the sensual world.

The craving for existence (bhavatanha) is bound up with the eternity-belief (sassata-ditthi). It presupposes the permanence of a living being and the indestructibility of the ego despite the dissolution of the physical body. The belief is not deep-rooted among the Buddhists, but non-Buddhists hold it so firmly that it is a major impediment to their spiritual liberation. Their craving for existence is evident in their illusion of permanent self and their love of sensual pleasure.

The craving for non-existence (vibhavatanha) is born of the annihilation belief (uccheda-ditthi). The belief is not found among Buddhists and no one is a true Buddhist if he or she holds the belief. The craving for non-existence means the desire for the automatic cessation of the life-stream after death as well as the love of pleasure rooted in the materialistic view of life.

Each of these three cravings stems from the failure to realize anicca, dukkha and anattá through the introspection of feelings. So in order to forestall craving and its consequences, namely, rebirth and suffering, the yogi should contemplate every phenomenon, and try to see everything as it really is.

## **Tanha Causes Upadana**

From craving there arises clinging (upadana). The Pali term upadana is a compound of "upa" - intense, extreme, and "adana" - grasp, take, and so it means to grasp firmly, or intense, obsessive craving. Clinging is of four kinds: (1) clinging to sensuous objects, (2) clinging to false views, (3) clinging to irrelevant, non-Aryan practices as the way to salvation, and (4) clinging to attá or ego-belief.

(1) Clinging to sensual objects:

Sensual objects excite the desire of all living beings who are not free from the craving for sensual pleasure. These objects are five in number viz., visual form, sound, odor, taste and contact.

Visual form is the object that is pleasant and attractive to the eye. It may possess natural beauty or it may appear to be beautiful in the eyes of the viewer. Pleasant visual form, whether real or apparent, is to be found in men, women and consumer goods. It is the physical appearance of females that attracts the males and vice-versa. The things that both men and women desire are clothes, jewelry, cars, etc. It is not merely the form or color that excites desire. Man and woman are drawn towards each other not only by the complexion but by the whole body of the opposite sex, and the same may be said of consumer goods that make people greedy. Form or color only serves to introduce or identify the object of desire just as the cry of an animal helps the hunter to track and find it out.

Sound as the object of sensual pleasure is represented by the voices of men and women, songs or music. Some sounds and voices are really sweet while some only appear to be sweet in our ears. Again, it is not the mere sound that attracts us for when we delight in hearing a sound or a voice, the whole thing or the being that produces it forms the focus of our attachment.

Odor as the source of sensual pleasure comprises all kinds of scents: scent of flavors, powder, fragrant essence. Men and women apply these odoriferous substances to their bodies and delight in these scents, and it is not the scents alone but the whole physical body giving out the scent that attracts people.

The sensual pleasure that we have by eating or drinking is rooted in food and drinks. The good or pleasant taste may be real or apparent. For pigs, dogs and other animals, garbage, refuse and filth may be a source of sensual pleasure. Some people are very fond of bitter or spicy food. Some like intoxicants. Their pleasure is more apparent than real since normal ordinary people do not share their tastes. The pleasure of eating is not confined to food; it centers also on the preparation of food and the man or woman who prepares it. This is evident in the pleasure of a man who enjoys eating the food prepared by his wife although her culinary skill may not impress other people.

Another source of sensual pleasure is the body or tactile impression. Soft and smooth beds, comfortable clothing, something warm in cold season and something cold in hot season, the body of the opposite sex - all these form the objects of contact that create not only the craving for the tactile impression but also the craving for the whole body of the living or non-living object. The tactile impression only serves to pave the way for attachment to the whole body.

## **Bases Of Sensual Pleasure**

Then there are living and non-living objects that form the sources of sensual pleasure. There are gold, silver, jewelry, rice, cattle, poultry, vehicles, houses, land, attendants. Men work daily to secure these sources of pleasure. They seek these things to have good food, good clothes and good houses, to see movies and so forth.

Sensual desire (tanha) usually leads to intense craving for sensual objects (kamapadana). When a man starts smoking, he delights in his new habit but as the habit grows upon him he becomes addicted to it. Thus, we become excessively fond of certain objects and we feel restless and discomfited if we do not get them. In this way tanha develops into upadana (clinging, grasping or infatuation).

Upadana cannot come into being without tanha. The music and songs of foreigners do not appeal to Burmese ears and so there is no craze for them among the people. Burmese people do not eat dogs. Dog's flesh is abhorrent to them and so there can be no upadana in regard to it.

### **(2) Ditthupadana (Bigotry)**

Another kind of upadana is ditthupadana, which means clinging to false views. It covers all the false views, exclusive of those in the categories of the third and fourth upadana. So every false belief is to be regarded as upadana. Here we will describe at length ten false views that have a firm grip on the people.

The first view is that alms giving is not a good kammic act, that it means only a waste of money. This view rejects the sense of values and the fruits of a good act. It has, however, no basis in fact. The act of Dana makes the donor joyful. It benefits the recipient physically and mentally and it may even help to save the life of a starving man. The donor is popular and highly esteemed. After his death, he attains the deva-world. It is hard to convince the skeptic of this post-mortem reward, but these other-worldly results of kamma come within the purview of Arahats and other holy men with psychic powers. One of these powers is the ability to see with the divine eye (dibbacakkhu). This psychic power enables one to see donors prospering in deva-worlds or evil-doing non-donors suffering in the lower worlds. Such vision can be had even by some yogis who have not acquired psychic powers but developed much samádhi. Again some may dismiss these visions as figments of imagination but the agreement of these accounts about the other worlds lends weight to their credibility.

The second false view is also a negation of the kammic benefits for alms-giving on a grand scale.

The third false view rejects the kammic benefits of feeding guests, giving gifts on new year day and so forth. This view is essentially the same as the third view. It

refers to small acts of Dana that were in vogue in ancient India but were dismissed as futile by heretics.

The fourth view denies the kammic result of any morally good or evil act. There is a lot of evidence for the kammic effects of a man's acts in this life, and, as for the other-worldly result of an act, those with psychic power can testify to it. But people who are excessively fond of sensual pleasure like to give free rein to their desires. They frown on moral values and ideas, which they regard as a hindrance to their material progress. So they put forward many arguments to justify their rejection of the kammic law. In the final analysis all this is due to their excessive love of sensual pleasure.

The fifth and sixth view deny any respect, honor or support that we owe to our parents for all their loving care in our childhood. It is said that a man and his wife get children through sexual intercourse by accident, that they bring up the children from a sense of responsibility, and so there is no reason why children should be grateful to their parents. So it is not a good deed on the part of a man to look after his parents nor is it an evil to wrong them. It is a terrible view; those who hold it will not be respected by their children.

The seventh view denies the existence of any world other than the human and the animal worlds. It also rejects the belief that an animal may be reborn as a human being.

The eighth view denies rebirth of a human being in deva or animal worlds or in hell. It preaches annihilation of life after death.

The ninth view denies rebirth by ‘opapatika’ or spontaneous generation. In other words, it denies the existence of devas, brahmas, petas, asuras, etc., who appear with their full-fledged bodies without being conceived in the womb. This view is untenable since encounters with good or evil spirits are reported from all over the world; there are mediums and witch doctors who can invoke spirits; and devas, Brahmas, etc., are sometimes visible to the yogis who practice vipassana.

The last view is that there is no ascetic or Brahman who speaks of this world and the other invisible world and who conforms to his teaching. The view implies that there is no person who can speak independently of this world and the other world on the basis of his actual extraordinary experience, that all their teaching is guesswork and speculation, and so false and evil.

Today this view is echoed by those who scoff at religion. They reject the existence of Buddhas and Arahats who know the world as it really is through their own effort. But the logic underlying this view is self-defeating for by the same kind of reasoning, one can reject the view since those who hold it also do not know anything about this or the other world really.

As for the Buddha-Dhamma, it rests on extraordinary insight (Sayain abhinna desita). As such it leads itself to empirical investigation and there is much scientific evidence for it.

The man who preached the Indian brand of agnosticism in the time of the Buddha was Ajita. He attacked all religious teaching without qualification and so it is to be assumed that the arahats and the Buddha, too, were the targets of his denunciation.

## **Right Views**

All these ten wrong views boil down to the denial of the law of kamma for the rejection of kamma means rejection of any benefit accruing from the acts of Dana and reference to parents, and other good deeds, as well as the kammic potential for Arahatship or Buddhahood. Likewise, the ten right views mentioned below are based on the belief in kamma, or moral retribution.

(1) The first view is that Dana is beneficial. One who gives alms is admired at least by the recipients. They will respect him, praise him and help him when he is in trouble. He dies calmly with good death-bed visions and after his death he attains good rebirth in deva-worlds or in human society. His good rebirth may finally lead to the Aryan path and Nibbána. It was usually with an act of Dana that the bodhisattva, and others embarked on their long spiritual journey leading to the goal of Buddhahood, paccekabuddhahood or Arahatship.

The kammic effect of alms-giving is also evident in the material prosperity of some people. Some people do the same job such as business, farming, etc., but differ in their accomplishments. Some become prosperous while others make no progress materially. Some meet with success without working hard while others fail to prosper despite their hard work. Other things being equal, this disparity in the fortunes of some persons is no doubt due to Dana or lack of Dana in a previous life.

(2) and (3) The man who believes in the law of kamma will have no doubt about the kammic potency of giving alms lavishly or the small acts of Dana such as feeding the guests, giving presents and so forth.

(4) These three right views are implicit in the law of kamma or moral retribution. That a man fares according to his good or bad deeds is an undeniable fact of life. A man who leads a good life in accordance with the instruction of his parents and teachers is popular, gets help from others and achieves success, and when he grows up he becomes a prosperous gentleman. Similarly, because of good kamma in a previous life a man may be born of a good family and blessed with health, wealth, physical beauty and sincere friends. The bad effect of evil kamma such as ill-health, poverty, ugliness, etc., are equally well-known to everybody.

(5) and (6) The belief in kamma also implies a recognition of our deep gratitude to parents. Parents take care of their children from the time of their conception. The mother is especially careful about her health, her food, and movements for the sake of the child in her womb. If she is a good Buddhist, she keeps Sabbath and contemplates the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha in the hope of influencing her child spiritually. After the birth of the child, the parents have to attend to his physical needs and educate him, and when he comes of age they have to give him financial support for a start in life. For these reasons, it is our bounden duty to revere and care for our parents; and this is a kammic act that benefits us immensely. At the very least, a man who respects his parents will be respected by his children while a man who wrongs his parents is very likely to be disdained by his children.

## Seeing The World Beyond

(7), (8) and (9) The right views about the existence of this world, the invisible world and the living beings such as the devas who come into existence by spontaneous materialization. These right views are also implicit in the belief in the law of kamma for the law of kamma makes it possible for a living being from the animal or deva world to pass on to human world or vice-versa according to his kamma after death. This can be demonstrated to a certain extent but the observer will have to possess psychic powers, vipassana insight or the ability to think rationally.

Through the practice of samatha jhana, a yogi can acquire the power of recalling the past lives; he can have the divine-eye (dibbacakkhu) that affords him a glimpse into the physical appearance, etc., of a person who has passed on to a new existence. This psychic power is also accessible to those who practice vipassana.

Those who cannot practice samatha or vipassana will have to depend on their power of reasoning. There are certain persons here and there who can recall their previous lives, people who are credited with jatissaranana in Buddhist literature. They describe their past lives as human beings, animals, spirits or ghosts. To the rational mind, these accounts clearly point to the post-mortem transition from this world to the other world and vice-versa as well as to the instant materialization of certain beings.

Here we wish to mention the way of thinking on the issue of a future life suggested by wise men. Suppose a man accepts the belief in kamma and life after death while another man rejects the belief. The second man will not do good deeds such as Dana, sila and he will not avoid doing evil. He will give free rein to his desires. Therefore, he has no virtue that is worthy of respect and admiration by other people. If contrary to his belief, the law of kamma and a future life are real, he is bound to land in the lower worlds immediately after his death and suffer for many lifetimes throughout his samsaric existence.

On the other hand, the man who believes in kamma and after-life will avoid evil, do good and so, even if there is no kamma or a future life, he will be extolled and well-known for his good character. He will rejoice at the contemplation of his good deeds. As a good citizen, he will lead a peaceful life. These are the benefits that will certainly accrue to him from his belief in kamma in the present life. And if life after death is indeed a fact, he is assured of happiness hereafter. So it is reasonable to accept the belief in after-life since it serves our interests now or in future in any event. This is the infallible way of thinking that the Buddha recommends in Apannaka Sutta of Majjhima Nikáya.

## **Parami And Kamma**

(10) Faith in the Buddha, the Arahats or holy men who can claim transcendent knowledge about this and the other worlds and who possess a noble character that lends credence to their teachings - such faith also presupposes the belief in kamma, for the spiritual attainment of Arahats and the Buddha rests in part on their parami (perfection) which does not differ essentially from kamma. Development of parami is a kind of learning. Just as a child has to learn many things in order to become well-educated, so also a bodhisattva has to seek knowledge and train himself for the attainment of his goal.

Some parents and elders take their children to movies and theatres while others take theirs to pagodas and monasteries. In this way the children acquire good or bad habits and develop a craving for sensual pleasure or a taste for the higher things of life. Good habits and good training may be called a kind of parami. Some children are spontaneously inclined to religious life, some men and women have immense zeal and energy for the practice of vipassana. Such a child's unusual interest in religion or a man's unusual love of spiritual life is born of the parami in a previous life.

Prince Siddhartha became the Buddha through the gradual development and perfection of parami such as Dana, síla, nekkhama (renunciation) and so forth over aeons spanning innumerable lifetimes. It was not a matter of easy accomplishment in a single existence. It was this cumulative kammic potential or parami that helped to strengthen his will when he left his family and the luxuries of his royal palace in search of enlightenment. Today, some people speak of their disillusionment with life but it is hard for a man to renounce all his wealth and become a monk, let alone to think of the kind of renunciation that distinguished the bodhisattva.

The bodhisattva cultivated other paramis, too, for the sake of wisdom, at energy fortitude and so forth in way of his previous lives. As a result in his last existence he reflected and realized independently the nature of life, its dependent origination, etc. It was his kammic potential (parami) that finally led to his supreme enlightenment and likewise it was the parami that contributed to the spiritual attainments of Paccekabuddhas and Arahats. Hence, the belief in kamma makes it possible for the

spiritual aspirant to become the arahat, Paccekabuddha or the Buddha and one who accepts the belief has no doubt about the transcendent knowledge of the Buddha and other holy men.

In short, ditthupadana is generally synonymous with rejection of the law of kamma. It was not widespread in the time of the Buddha or even about a hundred years ago but now it is gaining ground, thanks to the books that have criticized the doctrine of kamma in the name of scientific knowledge. As the scriptures say, false beliefs are usually rooted in craving and with man's increasing hunger for material goods, skepticism about kamma is likely to become dominant and it is up to good people to guard themselves against it.

Apart from the rejection of kamma, ditthupadana also means strong attachment to all false beliefs e.g. ego-belief, annihilation-belief, etc. The exceptions are the two false beliefs covered by silabbatupadana and attavadupadana.

### **(3) Silabbatupadana (Clinging To False Practices)**

Silabbatupadana is clinging to wrong practices that do not lead to cessation of suffering. It is the view, which identifies the habits of cows, dogs and other animals with the way to the end of dukkha. It found expression among some ascetics in the time of the Buddha. Like animals, they lived naked, ate, defecated and went about on all fours, and slept on the ground. They believed that such a way of life served to purge them of all evil kamma and forestall new kammic action, thereby assuring them of an end to suffering and eternal bliss after death.

To a Buddhist, this kind of belief may sound incredible but some people's preferences are very odd and they differ in their views and inclinations. So there came to the Buddha two ascetics, one Punna who lived like an ox and another Seniya who lived like a dog. They asked the Lord about the benefits of their practice. The Lord was reluctant to answer but when pressed for his view, he replied that an ascetic who committed himself wholly to the habits of an ox or a dog would be reborn as an ox or a dog after death; that it was wrong to believe that such practices led to the deva-world; and that one who held a wrong belief was likely to land in hell or in the animal world. Then the Buddha went on to describe (1) the evil practices that bear evil fruits, (2) the good practices that bear good fruits, (3) the evil practices mixed with good practices and (4) the practice of the Aryan path that leads to the total extinction of good and bad kammass.

On hearing this sermon Punna became the disciple of the Buddha. Seniya joined the order and attained Arahatsip through the practice of the Dhamma.

## The Story Of Korakhattiya

In the time of the Buddha there was a man named Korakhattiya who lived like a dog. One day the Buddha passed by him, accompanied by a Licchavi Bhikkhu, Sunakkhatta by name.

Sunakkhatta saw the ascetic moving on all fours and eating the food on the ground without the help of his hands. The ascetic's way of life gave the monk the impression of a holy man, nay, an Arahant who had few desires. In point of fact, the ascetic's mode of life was a kind of silabbatupadana that would lead him to one of the four lower worlds. It was abhorrent to those who had high ideals and aspirations. It had appeal for Sunakkhatta only because of his low tastes and desires. The Licchavi monk was exceptional in this respect. There were then not as now many people who preferred false views and false practices that did not accord with the Buddha's teaching. This was probably a hangover from wrong attachments in their previous lives.

The Buddha divined Sunakkhatta's thoughts and said, "So you regard that ascetic as an Arahant! I wonder why you do not feel ashamed of being called the disciple of the Buddha." The monk then accused the Lord of envying the ascetic's Arahantship. This is of course the kind of retort that is to be expected from an ignorant man when someone speaks the truth about his false teacher. The Buddha explained that his object was to remove the monk's illusions that would do him no good. Then he went on to predict that after seven days the ascetic would die of indigestion and land in the lowest Asura world; that his body would be dumped in a certain cemetery; that if the monk went there and asked about his present abode, the dead body would reveal it.

The Buddha made this prophecy in order to restore Sunakkhatta's faith in him. Through the practice of samatha Sunakkhatta had attained jhana and divine eye. With his divine eye he had seen the gods and goddesses and as he wished to hear their voices he asked the Buddha about the way to the attainment of divine ear. But the Lord declined to fulfill his desire because his bad kamma stood in the way and he would blame the Lord for the non-attainment of divine ear. Nevertheless, he lost his faith in the Lord because he thought that it was envy that motivated the Lord to refuse his request. So the Buddha predicted the ascetic's fate to impress Sunakkhatta and salvage his faith.

Sunakkhatta informed the ascetic of the Lord's prediction and warned him against overeating. The ascetic fasted for six days but on the seventh day he could not resist the temptation any longer. He wolfed down the food provided by a lay follower and died of indigestion that very night.

His fellow ascetics dragged his dead body to dump it in any place other than the cemetery specified in the Buddha's prediction. They got to a cemetery but found it to

be the very place they wished to avoid for it had the kind of grass predicted by the Buddha. They tried to drag the body away but the creeper-rope snapped and all their efforts to remove it were in vain. So they had to abandon the corpse there.

Sunakkhatta heard the news but still he hoped to prove the falsity of the latter part of the Lord's prediction. He went to the cemetery and rapping the dead man asked about his abode. The corpse arose and after saying that he was in Kalakamjika asura abode fell back on the ground. Kalakamjika is the lowest asura abode. Asura is a kind of peta with a monstrous body and a mouth, which is so small that it cannot drink and eat well.

According to the commentary, it was the Buddha's psychic power that made the dead body possessed by the asura peta. Given the ability of some sorcerers to raise the dead, there is no need to have any doubt about the resurrection of the dead ascetic through the psychic power (iddhi) of the Buddha.

Sunakkhatta came back crestfallen and had to admit that the Lord's prophecy had come wholly true. Even so, he did not have complete faith in the Buddha. Later on he left the holy order and disparaged the Lord.

## **Other Silabbata Practices**

Besides the mode of life of cows and dogs there are other practices that can be described as silabbata. Some people emulate the elephants, horses, and so forth. In other words, they worship animals. The commentary refers to king-worshippers, which may mean in Burma people who worship various nats. Nat-worship among Burmese people is not motivated by the desire for liberation from samsara (life cycle). It stems from the hope for material benefits here and now and as such it does not fall within the scope of silabbatupadana, but it is upadana over the belief that leads some people to make animal sacrifice in their worship of the nats.

There are also fire-worship, Naga-worship, moon-worship, sun worship, spirit-worship and so forth. If the object in any kind of worship is to have happiness or spiritual liberation after death, it is silabbatupadana. In short, all practices divorced from the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are labeled silabbata and attachment to them as the way to salvation is silabbatupadana.

The yogi who has attained at least the sotápanna stage through the contemplation of nama-rupa is well aware of the right path to Nibbána and so he has freed himself from the belief in silabbata. He knows empirically that the way to the end of suffering is only through the introspection of nama-rupa and the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

For example, if you know from experience how to go from this meditation center to Shwedagon pagoda, you will not be misled by anyone who points out the wrong

way. Likewise, the yogi at the sotápanna stage knows the right way to Nibbána and so he has no illusion about the beliefs and practices such as belief in God, Nat worship or asceticism that pass for the way to salvation.

Those who do not know the right path are not free from such illusion. They may have acquired it from their ignorant parents, teachers or friends; or because of their poor basic knowledge, they might have been misguided by books that advocate false beliefs and practices. The ordinary man (puthujjana) is ignorant of the right path to Nibbána and so he will have to reckon with many teachers and practices through his samsaric existence. If he falls for a false teacher or a false practice, he is in for a lot of suffering. Thus the practice of austerities will only cause hardships and pain and the performance of animal sacrifice will certainly lead to the lower worlds.

It is also upadana over silabbata to believe that rupa jhana or arupajhana means complete salvation. In short, even the moral perfection or jhanic attainment in the mundane sphere, though commendable, may lead to silabbatupadana if it is divorced from the holy path of vipassana and regarded as the total liberation. Udaka Sutta of Samyutta Nikáya refers to the rishi Udaka, who having attained the arupa world through his arupajhana declared that he had uprooted the cause of dukkha and made an end of it. This was also the illusion of another rishi called Alara. This illusion or upadana led to their good kamma, which in turn led to their rebirth in the arupa worlds.

So in his discourse to Baka Brahma, the Buddha says: "I see the dangers of birth, old age, death, etc., inherent in the three worlds of sensuality, rupa and arupa. I see those who seek Nibbána still bound to existence. So I do not approve of any kind of existence. I have repudiated all attachment to existence."

Like the two Rishis, those who do not know the Buddha's teaching never attain their goal. Although they seek permanent happiness, they follow the wrong path of silabbata and remain entangled in the samsaric existence of dukkha. So we can hardly over-emphasize the importance of right effort on the right path as pointed out by the Buddha.

#### **(4) Attavadupadana (Clinging To Belief In Soul)**

Attavadupadana is a compound of attavada and upadana. Attavada means belief in soul entity and attavadupadana is attachment to the view that every person is a living soul.

Attachment to the ego-belief is of two kinds, viz., ordinary attachment and deep-rooted attachment. Ordinary attachment that prevails among ignorant Buddhists is not harmful to progress on the holy path. The belief is not deeply entrenched because Buddhists accept the Buddha's teaching, which denies the permanent soul and recognizes nama-rupa as the only reality behind a living being. Intelligent

Buddhists are still less vulnerable to the belief. For they know that seeing, hearing, etc., involve only the sense-organs (eye, ear, etc.), the corresponding sense-objects (visual form, sound, etc.) and the corresponding states of consciousness.

But most people are not wholly free from the ego-belief. Even the yogi who practices vipassana may at times fall for it and it is likely to attract every man who has not attained the holy path.

In fact those who taught ego-belief described the ego as the owner of the five khandhas, as an independent entity, possessing free will and self-determination. It was this view of attá (soul) that the Buddha questioned in his dialogue with the wandering ascetic Saccaka. Said the Buddha, "You say that this physical body is your attá. Then can you always keep it well, free from anything unpleasant?" Saccaka had to answer in the negative. Further questioning by the Lord elicited from him the reply that he had in fact no control over any of the five khandhas.

So the ancient Buddhist teachers translate "rupam anattá" as "the physical body is subject to no control", etc. In fact it is the denial of the "samiatta" or the false view of attá as a controlling entity. Every ordinary person holds this view and believes in free will. He can overcome it completely only through vipassana contemplation.

The attavada teachers also say that attá exists permanently in the physical body. In other words, it means the personal identity that is said to persist through the whole existence.

Again, they say that attá is the subject of all actions, thus identifying it with sankhára khandha. It is the illusion that creates the belief: "It is I that see, hear, etc."

They also say that attá is the living entity that feels; that it is attá that is happy or unhappy. In other words, they describe attá or soul in terms of vedana or feeling.

Thus, although the Atmanists (attavadi) insist that attá has nothing to do with the five khandhas, they credit it with ownership of the body, etc., permanent residence in the body, subjectivity and feeling; and, hence, in effect they identify it with the five khandhas. The ego-illusion is rooted in the khandhas and a man can free himself completely from it only when he becomes aware of the real nature of khandhas through contemplation.

Of the four upadana, the first upadana (clinging to sensuality) is the developed form of craving (tanha). The other three upadanas differ only as regards their objects; basically they all relate to beliefs, viz., belief in ego, belief in the efficacy of practices other than those of the Eightfold Path, and any false belief other than those in the category of the other two upadana. All false beliefs arise in connection with craving. Men cling to a belief because they like it. Thus there is no doubt that all the four upadanas stem from craving and hence the Buddha's teaching: "From tanha there arises upadana."

In point of fact, craving is the cause and clinging is the effect. Craving for sensual pleasure, ego-belief, or practices irrelevant to the holy path or other false beliefs is the cause, and this craving develops into clinging to sensuality, ego-belief, etc., and thus becomes effects

## **Clinging Leads To Becoming**

Upadana leads to bhava (becoming). There are two kinds of bhava, viz., kammabhava and upapattibhava.

### **(1) Kammabhava**

Kammabhava means the kamma that leads to rebirth. The Buddha describes it as the punnabhi, apunnabhi and anenjabhi sankhárás that lead to lower sensual world or the higher material and immaterial worlds. He also identifies kammabhava with all kmmas that give rise to new existence.

Of the three sankhárás, punnabhi sankhárá comprises the eight wholesome volitions (cetana) in sensual sphere and five wholesome volitions in the material (rupa) sphere. Apunnabhi sankhárá is the group of twelve unwholesome volitions. Anenjabhi sankhárá means the four wholesome volitions in immaterial sphere. Also leading to rebirth are the kmmas that arise together with the wholesome volitions in sensual sphere, viz., having no covetous thoughts or designs about another's possessions, having no design against another person's life and holding right views. These kmmas are implicit in punnabhi sankhárá. In short, kammabhava is the good or bad volition that leads to rebirth.

### **(2) Upapattibhava**

Upapattibhava is of nine kinds. (1) Kammabhava means the nama-rupas of living beings in the sensual world. In other words, kammabhava refers to existences in the hell and the worlds of devas, mankind, animals and petas. (2) Rupabhava - the khandhas of Brahmas with rupas. (3) Arupabhava - Nama khandhas of Brahmas with no rupas. (4) Sannibhava - nama-rupas of beings with gross perceptions, that is beings in 29 abodes other than asanni nevasanni abodes. (5) Asanaribhava - nama-rupa of asanni-brahmas. (6) Nevasanninasanni - Nama khandhas of higher Brahmas. (7) Ekavokarabhava - the bhava with only rupa khandha. (8) Catuvokarabhava - the bhava with four Nama khandhas. (9) Pancavokarabhava - of bhava with five nama-rupa khandhas.

In short, upapattibhava means the nama-rupas of the new existence that results from kamma. It comprises the vinnana, nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa and vedana.

The bhava that arises from upadana is basically kammabhava, the other upapattibhava being merely its by-product.

From contact with six pleasant or unpleasant sense-objects there arise six pleasant or unpleasant feelings.

Feelings lead to craving and craving develops into clinging; clinging to sensual objects may become excessive to the point of craving for union with one's family in a future life or attainment of Nibbána hand in hand with one's beloved. The excessive degree of a man's upadana is evident in the story of the merchant Mendaka.

## Story Of Mendaka

Mendaka was a rich merchant in a previous life. In the face of a famine, his stock of provisions gradually ran out and at last he had to send away his attendants and was left with his wife, a son, his daughter-in-law and a slave. His wife had cooked rice that was barely enough for their consumption, and they were about to eat it when a paccekabuddha appeared to receive food.

At the sight of the paccekabuddha, the merchant thought of his bad kamma, that is, lack of Dana in a previous life that had now brought about his starvation. He then offered his share of rice to the paccekabuddha and prayed for abundant supply of food and reunion with the members of his household in his future lives. His wife too donated her share of rice and expressed a similar wish in her prayer. The son and his wife followed suit and prayed in the same vein, that is, for unlimited supply of food and money as well as reunion with the same wife, husband, parents and slaves.

The prayers of the merchant and his family clearly point to the powerful influence of upadana in the sensual sphere and most people today are no less subject to the same kind of attachment. But more appalling is the upadana of the slave Punna. After offering his share of rice, he prayed for abundance of food and rebirth as the slave of the same family! It never occurred to him to pray for rebirth as a king or a merchant; his attachment to his masters and mistresses was so strong that he wanted only to be their slave hereafter.

Once there was a village headman who stood well with Government officials. Those were the days when under British rule most of the high-ranking officials were Englishmen. The headman took much delight in paying respect to them. He said that he enjoyed saying, Phaya, "Yes, my Lord," when he was called by an officer. His attachment was essentially the same as that of Punna.

The paccekabuddha blessed them and departed. By means of his psychic power they saw him fly back to the Himalayas and share the food with five hundred other fellow Buddhas.

On that very day, the merchant and his family found their acts of Dana bearing fruit wonderfully. They found the rice pot full of rice. They ate to their hearts' content, but

the pot was always full of rice. They found their granaries, too, overflowing with grains.

Their prayers were fulfilled in the lifetime of the Buddha-Gotama for they became members of the same household in Baddiya, a city of the Magadha country. The news of the fulfillment of their prayers was so unusual and amazing that the king made an inquiry through a minister and found that it was indeed true. This story is mentioned in Vinaya Pitaka.

## **Upadana And Kammabhava**

When the sensual desire for an object develops into an intense craving, a person becomes desperate and tries to secure it by fair means or foul. Thefts, robberies, frauds, murders and so forth that are rampant nowadays stem from upadana. Some crimes are rooted in sensual upadana while others arise from one of the three kinds of illusion based on upadana. People commit crimes not only because of their unwholesome desire but also because of their blind attachment to wives, husbands, etc.

The following is a story illustrative of the evil kammabhava resulting from sensual upadana.

## **Puppharatta Jataka**

Long ago, there was a poor man in Benares. He had only a suit of thick clothes. He washed it to wear during the Tazaungdine festival, but his wife disliked the white clothes and craved for a garment of pink color. All his efforts to reason with her being in vain, the man at last sneaked into the royal garden at night to steal the flower that was to be used for dyeing his wife's garment. He fell into the hands of the guards and was ordered by the king to be impaled. He suffered terribly with the crows pecking at his eyes. Yet he murmured that his physical pain was nothing when compared to the mental suffering that overwhelmed him when he thought of the non-fulfillment of his wife's desire and his inability to enjoy the festival together with her. So crying over his ill luck, he died and landed in hell.

Today, there may be many people who do evil due to the pressure of those whom they love. All these evil deeds comprise kammās stemming from upadana and leading to the lower worlds. So Visuddhimagga says: "Under the influence of sensual upadana, people do evil in deeds, words and thought because of their craving for sensual objects in the present life and their desire to preserve the objects in their possession. Such evil deeds usually lead to the lower worlds."

## Right And Wrong Good Kamma

Some good deeds are right but some are wrong. The so-called good deeds that some people do are harmful and as such they are evil kammās. For example, some people believe that it is a good deed to put an end to the suffering of some animals by cutting short their span of life. Every living being is afraid to die or suffer pain and it is certainly wrong to cause pain and death to animals.

Some people also consider it a good deed to bring about the speedy death of a person who is suffering from an incurable, painful disease. But the patient does not want to die although he wants to be free from pain. Even if he expresses the desire to die, it is wrong from the Buddhist point of view to cause the death of a living being and if one directly or indirectly causes the premature death of a parent by "mercy killing", it is a grave kammic offence that leads to hell.

"Craving for the sensual pleasures of the human and deva-worlds, and misled by false teachings, etc., some people do misdeeds such as killing for the attainment of their object. But as a result of their evil kamma, they land in the lower worlds after death."

According to the commentary, misconceptions of those people arise from false teachers, lack of good kamma in the past and the failure to guard oneself. Reliance on evil teachers leads to evil kamma, much evil kamma in the previous life makes it easy to acquire evil views and evil habits, and lack of self-vigilance makes one an easy prey to temptation.

True religion is called saddhamma "the religion of the good man". Those who follow the true religion hear good teachings, avoid evil deeds, evil words and evil thoughts, hold right views about the future life, kamma and its fruits, etc., cultivate good thoughts and practice Dana, sīla and bhāvanā for their welfare.

The practice of alms giving, morality and mental development is true and good Dhamma because it is harmless and acceptable to everybody. Nobody will blame a man who avoids killing, stealing, abusing and other misdeeds. The good deeds, which we do for our welfare here and now or hereafter, are wholesome kammās that stem from upadana in the sensual sphere. These kammās lead to rebirth in the human or deva worlds. So the Visuddhimagga says: "Those who hear the true teaching believe in kamma and the efficacy of good deeds as passport to better life in the sensual worlds of rich men, aristocrats or divine beings. So they do good deeds under the influence of kamupadana and are reborn in the human and deva worlds."

## Kamma and Rebirth

As it is said, "Bhava paccaya jati," rebirth occurs in the human and deva worlds or in the lower worlds because of good or evil kamma-process. So rebirth stems from

kammas, which result from, clinging (upadana) and craving that is rooted in the contact between the six sense-objects and the corresponding sense-organs (ayatana).

In other words, there arise vinnana, nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa and vedana in the present life as the avijja sankhára, etc., in a previous existence and now on top of that, tanha and upadana give rise to new kamma, thereby providing the ground for new rebirth. The situation is like that of a man who has committed a crime while he is in prison for a previous conviction, or that of a man who has incurred new debt before he has fully settled his old debt.

Such new kammas accumulate by the thousands in a single lifetime. Under certain conditions one of these kammas becomes a death-bed vision and leads to rebirth while other kammas will create rebirth at other times in the life-cycle. If there are residual kammas from the previous lives that possess great force, they take precedence over present kamma, appear as death-bed visions and create rebirth in the lower or higher worlds. The post-mortem destiny of the person in such cases is determined by the nature of kamma.

## **Four Kinds Of Kamma**

Kamma is of four kinds, according to the way in which it bears fruit. (1) “garukamma” - weighty kamma, (2) “bahula or acinnaka kamma” - habitual kamma, (3) “asanna kamma” - death proximate kamma and (4) “katatta” kamma - stored-up kamma.

“Garukamma” is killing parents or an Arahant or causing injury to a Buddha or causing a schism in the Sangha. As for the good “garukammas”, there are the good kammas of the material and non-material worlds. The “garukammas” head off the fruition of other kammas and lead to rebirth, rupa and arupa jhanas among them leading to rupa and arupa rebirth.

The evil garukammas lead direct to hell after death; hence, the term “pancanantriyakammas” - the five great evil kammas leading invariably to hell. The man who kills his father or mother unknowingly or knowingly can never attain jhana or the path and fruition (maggaphala) in the present life; he is bound to land in hell after his death. He cannot attain jhana or the path nor can any good kamma save him from hell. This is evident in the story of Ajatashatru.

## **Story Of Ajatashatru**

Ajatashatru was the son of Bimbisara, the king of Magadha state, a devoted follower of the Buddha. Prior to the birth of the prince, the queen had the desire to drink the blood from the right arm of the king. When the king learnt this, he had the blood taken out and fulfilled her desire. The soothsayers then predicted that the child in

the queen's womb would become the king's enemy. Hence the name Ajatashatru - the potential enemy of the father while still in the mother's womb.

The queen tried to abort the child but as the king's kamma and the child's kamma would have it otherwise, she did not succeed in her attempt. The king had her pregnancy well protected and the child was born. When he came of age, he was appointed heir-apparent.

Then the young prince fell into the clutches of the evil-minded Devadatta who misused his psychic power for his selfish ends. Turning himself into a boy with a snake coiled around his waist, he appeared before Ajatashatru and then showed himself as a Bhikkhu. The prince was deeply impressed, and no wonder for people are very much interested in miracles and they have blind faith in anyone who can perform them. The prince held Devadatta in high esteem and became his devoted follower.

Then Devadatta made another move for the success of his evil design. He told the prince that since people did not live long, he (the prince) should kill his father and become king while still in the prime of his life; and that he (Devadatta) on his part would kill the Buddha. The prince failed in his attempt on the life of the king but when the latter learnt of his desire, he handed over his kingship to his son.

The transfer of power nonetheless came short of Devadatta's scheme. On his advice, Ajatashatru imprisoned his father and starved him. The queen was the only person who was permitted to visit the prison and see the king. She secretly brought food for the king by various means and at last she was forbidden to visit the prison. From that day, the king got nothing to eat but still he managed to keep himself in good physical condition by pacing on the floor. Then by the king's order, the barbers caused such injury to the feet of his father as to make it impossible for him to walk. According to the commentary, he was thus injured because in a previous life he walked with footwear on the platform of a pagoda and trod with unwashed feet on a mat meant for the Bhikkhus.

King Bimbisara died probably at the age of 67. His son Ajatashatru was not evil-minded at heart. His good nature was evident in his devotion to the Buddha after he had wronged his father, his adoration and enshrinement of the Buddha relics and whole-hearted support, which he gave to the First Council. It was his association with the evil teacher that led him astray to the point of patricide. His life affords us a lesson that we should specially bear in mind.

On the very day of his father's death, his wife gave birth to a son. On hearing the news, he became excited and overwhelmed with great affection for his child. This reminded him of his father and he ordered the release of the imprisoned king, but it was too late. When later on he learnt from his mother how much he was loved and cared for by his father in his childhood, he was seized with remorse. His life became

wretched and miserable. He could not sleep at night, haunted by the visions of hell and smitten by conscience for his crime against his father, a devout lay disciple of the Buddha at that.

So led by the physician Jivaka, he went to see the Buddha. At that time the Lord was surrounded by over a thousand Bhikkhus. But as they were in a contemplative mood, all was quiet with none speaking or making any movement of their hands or feet. Being deeply impressed, the king said, "May my son Udayabaddha be blessed with the kind of serenity which these Bhikkhus possess!" Perhaps he feared lest his son should come to know how he seized power and try to follow in his father's footsteps. But later his fear did become a reality for down to his great grandson, the sons ascended the throne after killing their fathers.

King Ajatashatru asked the Buddha about the immediate benefits of the life in the holy order. The Lord enlarged on the benefits accruing from the holy life - the lay follower's reverence for the Bhikkhu, moral purity, the first jhana and other higher states of consciousness in the mundane sphere, psychic powers, extinction of defilements and the attainments of the holy path.

After hearing the sermon, Ajatashatru formally declared himself a disciple of the Buddha. He would have attained the first stage on the path but for his patricide. Nevertheless, from that time he had peace of mind and after his death, he was spared the terrors of Avici hell that would have been in store for him had he not met the Buddha.

## **Habitual And Deathbed Kammass**

The other three weighty kammass, viz., killing an Arahant, causing injury to the Buddha and willfully causing a schism in the Sangha are also bound to drag the offender to hell.

The other type of kamma that bears fruit is habitual kamma, called "bahula or acinna kamma". Failure to lead a good moral life may become habitual if no step is taken to remove it, and it will have evil kammic effect in a future life. So laymen should live up to the five precepts and in case of any breach verbally affirm the will to guard one's moral life more vigilantly. Moral purity is equally vital to the life of a Bhikkhu. Failure to make amends for any deliberate or unintentional violation of a Vinaya rule will create habitual kamma and so the Bhikkhu should seek to regain moral purity through confession and reaffirmation of his will to preserve it.

Alms-giving, reverence for parents and teachers, contemplation of the Buddha, practice of meditation and so forth, which one does daily are also habitual kammass that tend to bear immediate fruits.

In the absence of habitual kamma, what we do at the last moment of our life (“asanna kamma”: death-bed kamma) produces kammic results. In one Abhidhamma book, it is described as being more potent than habitual kamma but perhaps this is true only in exceptional cases. As the commentaries say, the habitual kmmas probably take precedence and bear fruits.

Nevertheless, in the light of stories in ancient Buddhist literature we can certainly rely on deathbed kamma. A dying man who had killed people for over 50 years attained the deva-world after offering food to Shariputra and hearing his discourse. This story finds an echo in the experience of a Sinhalese fisherman who landed in the deva world after his encounter with a thera just before his death.

As productive as the positive deathbed kamma is its negative counterpart. A Sinhalese layman who practiced meditation for many years was disappointed, as he had never seen even the light. He then concluded that the Buddha's teaching was not the way to liberation and because of this false view he landed in the peta world after his death.

Failure to encounter the light, etc., in the practice of meditation may be due to wrong method, wrong effort or lack of basic potential (parami). In the time of the Buddha, a monk called Sunakkhatta attained divine eye but not the divine-ear because he did not have the potential for it and, besides, there was his bad kamma as a hindrance.

So the yogi need not be disheartened if his practice does not produce the desired effect. By and large, practice along the right path leads to unusual experiences.

With tranquility and purity of mind, the material object of contemplation and the contemplating consciousness become clearly distinct, as do their causal relation and their ceaseless, rapid arising and dissolution. At that time, the yogi sees the light but even if he does not see it clearly he experiences joy, ecstasy, etc., for joy, ecstasy, tranquility, equanimity, etc., form the links of enlightenment (“bojjhanga”) that are so vital to the development of vipassana insight. Reflection on nama rupa by itself does not lead to these higher states of consciousness.

In the absence of habitual or death-bed kamma, there is Katatta kamma which means the kamma that one has done once in a lifetime.

## **Birth And Suffering**

The role of kamma in the chain of causation is underscored in the teaching sankhára paccaya vinnanani - "From sankhára there arises rebirth consciousness", which we have already explained in detail. The dying person is attached to the signs and visions relating to his kamma and so on his death there follow kamma-based rupas together with rebirth-consciousness conditioned by his death-bed attachment.

Contact with the sense-objects gives rise to feeling, which in turn produces desire. It does not matter whether the feeling is pleasant or unpleasant. Pleasant feeling creates attachment to pleasant objects while unpleasant feeling makes us crave for pleasant objects. When the desire becomes strong and develops into frantic craving (upadana), it results in activity or effort for its fulfillment. People do good or bad deeds, which they hope will help to satisfy their needs and desires. It is this kammabhava rooted in craving that gives rise to rebirth. Rebirth is bound up with suffering regardless of the world in which it takes place.

There is no need to dwell on the sufferings in the animal and other lower worlds. Among human beings, too, suffering is an inescapable fact of life. A man's suffering begins while he is in the mother's womb. He has to work hard for his living; he is harassed by bullies and tyrants. Even if he escapes from the dukkha inherent in the struggle for survival, he will finally have to face old age, sickness and death. From the time of his conception, man is headed towards these inevitable evils of life. He is approaching them at every moment. He may live an apparently care-free, happy life but his nama-rupas are forever in the process of ageing and disintegration.

There is an Indian story, which stresses the inevitability of old age, sickness and death. A man being afraid of old age rose into the air with the elixir of life in his mouth and hid in the sky. Another man hid under the sea to escape sickness and still another hid in a cave in Himalayas to avoid death. When their sons searched for them they found that the first man had become old with all the ugly signs of decrepitude, the second man was sick unto death and the third man was dead.

Everyone is subject to old age, sickness and death. Once a man is reborn, there is nothing that will protect him from these evils of existence. Hence, the Buddha's saying in the Dhammapada that there is no place in the sky, on land or in the sea, where one can escape death.

## **Grief And Lamentation**

Death and the other two evils of life are inevitable so long as rebirth takes place within the framework of disintegrating nama-rupa. Rebirth leads also to grief, anxiety, lamentations and anguish.

We grieve when a member of the family dies. The grief is overwhelming when we lose someone, e.g. parents or a husband on whom we have to depend or someone, e.g. a son or a daughter whom we love dearly. Another cause for grief is the loss of material possessions through evil-minded officials, robbers, thieves, destructive fires, floods, cyclones, and hated heirs. Grief is also caused by the affliction of disease and decline of health. Some sick persons are so much depressed that their mental states become a hindrance to their recovery. In the case of morally scrupulous monks and laymen, any damage to moral life gives rise to anxiety. Thus, the rishi Isisinga suffered terrible anguish when his moral integrity was undermined by the seduction

of a goddess. Anxiety and repentance also torment those who realize their mistakes after having rejected the right view in favor of a wrong one under the guidance of a false teacher.

Besides, there are many other misfortunes in life, e.g. accidents, viz., victimization by robbers, etc., hardship in earning one's living and, securing the necessities of life and so forth that occasion grief, anguish and lamentation.

There is no need to dwell on the physical sufferings in hell and the animal and peta-worlds. Because of his consciousness, man also suffers anguish whenever he is in contact with unpleasant sense-objects. As he has thus to suffer mentally into the bargain, it is for him something like adding insult to injury. This does not apply to the Arahant or the noble one at the Anagami stage, for being free from irritation (dosa) he remains unperturbed in the face of physical suffering and so does the mindful yogi who is free from ego-illusion that tends to add to the sense of self-pity. Hence, the importance of the Buddha's teaching that we should be aware of unpleasant feeling when we suffer from it.

People are unhappy when they think of the frustrations and misfortunes that beset them in the past or at present or that may beset them in future. They feel bitter and upset when they find themselves in distress and burdened with misfortunes.

All these sufferings are rooted in rebirth. Life is all suffering without the ego and without anything good even if there were such ego to enjoy it.

According to the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada, the only thing that links one existence with another is the cause-and-effect relationship. From craving, kammic effort, etc., based on ignorance in one existence, there arise five effects, viz., consciousness, body and mind, sense-organs, contact, and feeling. These effects begin with rebirth and end in death with old age, anxiety and other sufferings in between them.

This teaching of the Buddha will not appeal to common people who harbor illusions of happiness and ego-entity. But impersonality and suffering are the unmistakable facts of existence and life in the deva-world is no exception. Some earth-bound devas have to struggle hard for survival and are more miserable than human beings. They are called "vinipatika" devas and they comprise ghosts, devils, etc., that belong to lower order of devas. Some devas in heavens are not happy because they do not have good abodes and enough attendants. Even Sakka, the king of devas, admitted to the elderly theravāda Maha Kassapa that he was not very much luminous as his attainment of deva-world was due to the good kamma which he did long before the proclamation of Buddha-Dhamma and that he had to hide himself when he saw the devas who outshone him as they had done good kamma in the time of the Buddha.

Thus, Sakka was not always happy and so were his female attendants who told Maha Kassapa that they were wretched and miserable since they counted for little

among the high-ranking queen-goddesses. Some devas become unhappy on the approach of death that is heralded by the withering of their bedecked flowers, the sweating from their armpits and other signs of senility. Some devas die suddenly while indulging in celestial pleasure just like a man whose life is cut off by stroke. Death may be a matter of seconds like the extinction of the flame of a candle. This is borne out by the story of Subrahma deva.

## Story Of Subrahma Deva

Subrahma deva was having a good time when his attendants, the goddesses who were singing and plucking flowers on the tree died suddenly and landed in hell. Subrahma deva saw them suffering in hell and at the same time he foresaw that he too would die in a few days and share the fate of his attendants. Being much frightened, he came to the Buddha and asked the Lord to show him the place where he could live without fear. The Lord then says that he sees no way to salvation for every living being other than the practice of “bojjhanga” Dhamma (links of enlightenment such as mindfulness), the “dhutanga” (ascetic practices) and “sammappadhana” (right exertion), that serve to put an end to defilements, the control of senses (indriyasamvarasile), the control that helps to keep off the defilements and Nibbána which means renunciation of everything.

On hearing this, the deva and his attendants attained the first stage on the holy path. What we should note here is the sudden death of the goddesses. The fate of those who thus die suddenly while engaged in the pursuit of pleasure is indeed terrible for they are likely to land in hell as a result of unwholesome kammic impulses. If there is any sign that heralds the approach of death, it creates fear and adds to their suffering.

Suffering that stems from attachment to pleasure is not confined to the sensual sphere. For it is the lot, too, of the Brahmas in their immaterial or formless (arupa) world. In the Brahma world there is no pleasure of sex or any other sensual pleasure. The Brahmas only see, hear or think and the objects of their seeing, etc., have no sexual overtones. But as Visuddhimagga says, some people develop a craving for the sensual pleasures of the Brahma world because they believe either through hearsay or speculation that such pleasures are superior to those of the human and deva-worlds. It is no other than their sensual craving that leads to the attainment of rupa jhana, arupajhana, Samapatti and finally lands them in the rupa or arupa Brahma worlds.

It is not surprising that some people think or speak of the sensual pleasure in the Brahma world. Those who are well aware of the true teachings of the Buddha will reject the idea but it probably appeals to ignorant people. The Indian religious books portray Brahma with his wife and some regard even Nibbána as a heavenly abode with celestial mansions where we can dwell with our families and attendants.

## **Kamaupadana Means All Kinds Of Excessive Craving**

Kamaupadana here means not only the excessive craving for sensual pleasure. It means also the developed forms of craving for the material and immaterial (rupa and arupa) worlds. Hence, according to Visuddhimagga, the yogi can do away with this inordinate craving only at the last stage of the holy path and it is this craving that lies at the root of every effort to attain rupa or arupa jhana. For ordinary people such jhana means rupa or arupa kammic effort based on sensual craving and this leads to rebirth in rupa or arupa world of Brahmas. From the time of rebirth there arises the ceaseless ageing (Jara) of nama-rupa or either of the two phenomena of life. The senility of the Brahma is not apparent like that of a human being but still it leads to decay, and when his course is run, he cannot avoid death.

Being free from hatred, the life of a Brahma is not subject to grief, worry, anxiety and so forth; and the lack of physical sensitivity makes him free from physical suffering. He cannot, however, escape birth, old age and death that are inherent in every kind of existence.

So escape from old age and death presupposes the effort to rule out the possibility of rebirth. In order to avoid rebirth, we must seek to avoid wholesome or unwholesome kamma and negation of kammic existence calls for negation of attachment and craving. For this purpose, the mental process must end in feeling and stop short of developing the desire for anything. This denial of desire through the contemplations, anicca, dukkha and anattá of everything arising from the senses is the only way to avoid craving, rebirth and other links in the causal sequence that leads to old age and death. This means the temporary extinction of suffering which the yogi can overcome once and forever when he develops vipassana insight on the holy path.

## **Attachment To Belief As The Cause Of Rebirth**

Ditthupadana means the attachment to the view, which rejects future life and kamma. Hence, ucchedaditthi, which insists on annihilation after death is a kind of ditthupadana. A person who holds such a belief will have no need to do good or avoid evil. He will do nothing for otherworldly welfare and seek to enjoy life as much as possible by fair means or foul. As he has no moral scruples, most of his acts are unwholesome kammias that create deathbed visions and lead him to the lower worlds. This is evident in the story of Nandaka peta.

Nandaka was a general in the time of king Pingala who ruled Surattha country that lay north of the present province of Bombay in West India. He clung to false views e.g. that it was useless to give alms and so forth. After his death he became a peta on a banyan tree, but when his daughter offered food to a monk and shared her merit with him, he had an unlimited supply of celestial drinks and food. He then realized

the truth of the kammic law and repented of his adherence of false views in his previous life. One day, he led king Pingala to his abode and entertained the king and his followers to a celestial feast. The king was much surprised and in response to his inquiry, the peta gave an account of his rebirth in the lower worlds as a kammic result of his false views, immorality and vehement opposition to alms-giving; and the sudden change of his fortune following his sharing of merit acquired by his daughter. He also described the suffering that he would have to undergo after his death, the terrible suffering in hell that he was to share with those who held wrong views and vilified the holy men during their earthly existence.

The moral of the story is that attachment to wrong views (e.g. that an act has no kammic result, etc.) leads to unwholesome acts and rebirth in the lower worlds.

The commentary also says that clinging to uccheda (annihilation) belief leads to deva or Brahma worlds if annihilation is supposed to follow demise on those higher planes of existence, but devas and Brahmas apparently do not believe in their annihilation after death. By and large, the belief in annihilation makes people prone to misdeeds.

Kammic deeds may also be motivated by eternity belief (sassataditthi). The belief creates the illusion of personal identity, the illusion which makes a man believe that it is his permanent self that will have to bear the consequences of his good or bad deeds in a future life. So he devotes himself to what he regards as good deeds. Some of his deeds may be bad in fact, but in any case his deeds, whether good or bad, that arise from eternity belief lead to rebirth and suffering.

Still, another mainspring of kammic deed is superstitious belief. There are many superstitions, for example, that seeing a man of low class brings about misfortune, that the beehive or a guana in a house is a sure omen of poverty. Under the influence of such beliefs, a person may do evil, such as treating an outcaste cruelly or killing the bees. This is borne out by the Cittasambhuta jataka.

In the jataka the bodhisattva was a man of low Chandala class called Citta. Ánanda was then his cousin named Sambhuta. They made their living by dancing with bamboos. One day, the daughter of a merchant and the daughter of a high-caste Brahmin who were very superstitious went for a picnic with their attendants. At the sight of the two dancers, they considered it an ill omen and returned home. Their irate followers then beat the two men for denying them the pleasure of the picnic.

The two dancers then went to Taxila and disguised as Brahmins, they devoted themselves to learning. Citta became a student leader by virtue of his intelligence. One day, their teacher sent them to a place where they were required to recite the Brahmanical parittas. There having got his mouth burnt by drinking hot milk unmindfully, Sambhuta uttered, "Khalu, Khalu" in his dialect and Citta was so absent-minded as to say, "niggala, niggala" ("spit out, spit out"); these slips of the

tongue led to their undoing for their high caste Brahmin students found out their secret. They were beaten and expelled from school.

On the advice of their teacher they became Rishis (forest ascetics or hermits). After their death they passed on to the animal world, first as two deer and as two eagles in their next existence. Then Citta became the son of the chief Brahmin and remembered his three previous lives. He led the life of a hermit and attained jhana and psychic powers. Sambhuta became a king, he remembered his low caste life as a Chandala and spent his time in the pursuit of sensual pleasure.

By means of his psychic power, Citta knew his brother's spiritual immaturity and after waiting for 50 years he came to the king's garden. The king recognized the hermit as his brother in a previous life and was prepared to share royal pleasures with him. But being aware of the kammic effects of good and bad deeds, the bodhisattva had pledged himself to a life of self-restraint, renunciation and detachment. He reminded the king of their close associations in their previous lives, to wit, as low-caste chandalas, as deer and as birds. His object was to point out the erratic course of kammic life and to urge the king to become an ascetic for further spiritual progress. But it was hard for Sambhuta to give up his worldly pleasures. So the bodhisattva returned to the Himalayas. Then the king became disenchanted with his worldly pleasures and went to the Himalayas where he was welcomed by the hermit. There, as a hermit he devoted himself to spiritual exercises and attained jhana and psychic powers.

## **Superstition And Evil Rebirth**

What we wish to emphasize in this story is the evil kmmas that arise from superstitions. The role of superstition as the cause of evil deeds is also evident in the story of Koka, the hunter.

In the time of the Buddha, there was a hunter called Koka in a certain village. One day he set out with his dogs to hunt in the forest. On the way he met a monk who was out on his begging round. The hunter considered this encounter an omen that boded no good. As luck would have it, he did not get any animal for food on that day. On his return he again met the monk. Now blind with fury and ill-will, he set his dogs on the monk. The monk had to run and climb up a tree.

He sat on a branch that was not very high. The hunter poked at the feet of the monk with the sharp end of an arrow. The latter had to lift his feet one after the other and at last his robe got loose and slipped down. It fell upon the hunter and seeing him thus wrapped up in the robe, the dogs mistook him for the monk and attacked him. Thus, he was killed by his own dogs. Then realizing that they had killed their master, the dogs ran away.

The monk got down from the tree and reported the matter to the Buddha. Thereupon, the Lord says, "The foolish man wrongs a person who has never wronged another. He wrongs a person who is free from defilements, but his evil deed boomerangs on him just like the particle of dust that returns to us when we throw it against the wind."

Here, the hunter's terrible death, his rebirth in the lower worlds and suffering arise from an evil deed that in turn is rooted in his superstition. Some people get alarmed when an astrologer says that the position of planets bodes no good for them. So they offer flowers and candles to the Buddha image, give Dana to the monks, hear the sermons and practice meditation. Some have the parittas recited by monks to stave off the impending evil that they associate with their unpleasant dreams. Their good deeds lead to good rebirth, but like the other rebirths that stem from evil deeds, it too is fraught with suffering.

Some ignorant people do evil to keep off the misfortunes that might befall them. The Jatakas mention the animal sacrifice of some kings that involves the killing of four goats, four horses, four men and so forth as propitiatory offerings to gods. On one occasion, this kind of rite was planned by king Kosala in the time of the Buddha.

The king had taken a fancy to a married woman and so one day he sent her husband on an errand to a distant place. Should he fail to accomplish the task entrusted to him and return to the capital on the same day, he was to be punished. The man carried out the king's order and returned before sunset, but the city gate was closed and so being unable to enter the city, he spent the night at Jetavana monastery.

Overwhelmed with lust and evil desire, the king could hardly sleep in his palace. He heard the voices of the four men who were suffering in hell for having committed adultery in their previous lives. It was perhaps by virtue of the Buddha's will and psychic power that the king heard these voices from hell. The king was frightened and in the morning, he sought the advice of the Brahmin counselor. The Brahmin said that the voices portended imminent misfortune and that in order to stave it off, the king should sacrifice elephants, horses, etc., each kind of animals numbering a hundred.

The king made preparations for the animal sacrifice. How cruel is human nature that dictates the sacrifice of thousands of lives to save one's own life. Among the potential victims there were human beings, and hearing their cries, queen Mallika approached the king and asked him to seek the advice of the Buddha.

The Buddha assured the king that the voices had nothing to do with him. They were the voices of four young men who, having seduced married women in the time of Kassapa Buddha, were now suffering in Lohakumbhi hell. They were now repentant and belatedly trying to express their desire to do good after their release from hell. The king was very much frightened and vowed never to lust for another man's wife.

He told the Buddha how the previous night had seemed very long because he could not sleep. The man who had fetched what the king wanted said too that he had traveled one yojana the previous day. Thereupon, the Buddha uttered the verse: "To one who cannot sleep, the night seems long; to the weary traveler, a yojana is a long distance. Similarly, for the foolish man who does not know the true Dhamma, the life-cycle is long."

After hearing this gatha, many people attained sotápanna and other stages on the holy path. The king ordered the release of all living beings that were to be sacrificed. But for the Buddha's words, he would have done unwholesome kammass, and this story shows how superstitious beliefs lead to evil deeds.

## **Fanaticism Or Religious Upadana**

Good or evil kammass are also born of religious attachments. By and large, people believe that theirs is the only true religion, that all other religions are false. So they try to spread their religion, convert other people by force or otherwise persecute the non-believers. All these evils had their origin in religious upadana or fanaticism.

Again kammic deeds may stem from attachment to ideology or views on worldly matters. Some people seek to impose their creed on other people by every means in their power; they propagate it in various ways and they discredit or slander or undermine the unity of those who do not agree with them. All these efforts and activities form the kammabhava due to upadana.

In short, all obsessions with practices, and beliefs other than the ego-belief mean excessive attachment to views that leads to kammic deeds.

## **Silabbatupadana - Attachment To Wrong Practices**

Some people believe that they can attain salvation through certain practices that have nothing to do with the Four Noble Truths. Such a belief is called silabbatupadana. It is silabbatupadana, too, to worship animals, to adopt the animal way of life, to perform certain rites and ceremonies in the hope of attaining salvation.

According to Visuddhimagga, some people rely on these practices as the way to salvation and do kammic deeds that lead to rebirth in the human world, the deva world and the material (rupa) and immaterial (arupa) worlds.

The Visuddhimagga refers only to kammass leading to the human and other higher worlds. It makes no mention of the kammass leading to the lower worlds. It does not follow, however, that silabbatupadana does not give rise to bad kammass. The commentary does not mention the evil kamma arising from silabbatupadana only because it is too obvious to need allusion. It is said in the Kukkuravatika and other Suttas that a man is reborn as an ox or a dog if he lives to the letter like those animals

in deed, word or thought or he is reborn in hell or animal world if he accepts the false belief but does not practice it fully. Needless to say, the killing of animals as a sacrifice to gods that arises from this upadana leads to the lower worlds, and so do other misdeeds resulting from the upadana that is bound up with certain forms of worship, rites and ceremonies.

In short, every belief in the efficacy of a practice as an antidote to evil is silabbatupadana. According to the commentaries on Visuddhimagga it is silabbatupadana even to rely entirely on conventional morality and mundane jhana as the way to liberation. The arupa jhanas attained by Alara and Udaka originated in this upadana and so do the deeds of many people that are based on faith in God. All these upadanans leads to rebirth and suffering.

## **Attavadupadana - Attachment To Ego-Belief**

The last upadana (attavadupadana) is attachment to ego-belief. It is the strong conviction about the ego entity, the firm belief that the ego exists permanently, that it is the agent of every deed, speech and thought.

Few people are free from this upadana. The average man believes that it is "I" who sees, hears, moves, etc. This illusion of ego-entity is the mainspring of self-love and concern about the welfare of one's self. The universality and omnipotence of self-love are underscored in Queen Mallika's reply to king Kosala.

Mallika was originally the daughter of a flower vendor. One day she met the Buddha on the way and offered her food. After eating the food, the Lord told Ānanda that the girl would become the queen of king Kosala. On that very day, king Kosala who was defeated in the battle, fled on horseback. Utterly exhausted and forlorn, the king rested in the flower garden where he was tenderly attended on by Mallika. Being much pleased, the king took her to the palace and made her his chief queen. The Buddha's prophecy came true because of her recent good kamma and her good deed in the past existence.

But Mallika was not as good looking as other lesser queens. Moreover, as a woman born of a poor family, she felt ill at ease among the courtiers. So in order to cheer her the king one day asked her whom she loved most. The answer, which he expected was "Your Majesty, I love you most." He would then tell her that he too, loved her more than anyone else and this demonstration of his love would, so he thought, increase their intimacy and make her more at home in the palace.

Nevertheless, as an intelligent woman who had the courage of conviction, Mallika replied frankly that there was no one whom she loved more than herself. She asked the king whom he loved most. The king had to admit that he too loved himself more than anyone else. He reported this dialogue to the Buddha. Then the Lord said, "There is no one in this world who loves another person more than himself.

Everyone loves himself or herself most. So everyone should have sympathy and avoid ill-treating another person."

In this saying of the Buddha, the word "self" or in Pali, attá, does not mean the attá or atman of the ego-belief. It refers only to self in its conventional sense or the self that a man speaks of to distinguish his own person from other living beings. But the ego-belief is also a source of self-love. The more powerful the belief is, the greater is the love of oneself.

We do not love anyone more than our own selves. One loves one's wife or husband or child only as a helpmate, an attendant or a support. Marital or parental love is no more real than love of precious jewelry. So if a person says that his love of someone is greater than his love of himself, his words must be taken with a large grain of salt. In cases of life-and-death crisis, even a mother will not care for her child.

Once a woman traveling with a caravan across the desert was left behind with her child as she was asleep when the caravan departed. As the sun rose higher in the sky, the sands became hotter and she had to place her basket and then her clothes under her feet. Still the heat became more unbearable till at last she was forced to put down her child under her body. Hence, the saying that even a mother will sacrifice her child for self-preservation.

Because of this self-love based on ego-belief, man seeks his welfare or the welfare of his family by fair means or foul. He does not hesitate to do evil that serves his interests. But the belief in a permanent self also leads to good kammás. Some people are motivated by the belief and so they practice síla, Dana, jhana, etc., for their welfare in afterlife. As a result they land in deva and Brahma worlds, but there they have to face again old age, death, and other evils of existence.

In short, every effort to seek one's welfare in the present life or hereafter is rooted in ego-belief. Such kammic effort differs from that arising from kamupadana only in that its mainspring is obsession with personal identity whereas in the case of the latter the driving-force is craving for sensual pleasure. Nevertheless, for those who are strongly attached to ego-belief, egoism is closely bound up with sensual desire.

As for the Ariyas who are wholly free from ego-belief, they are motivated only by kamupadana when they do good. Thus, the Dana, síla and bhávaná of Anathapindika, Visakha, Mahanama and others on the holy path may stem from their desire for better life in the human and deva-worlds or for the attainment of higher stages on the path.

## **Story Of Ugga**

The Anagami Ariyas do good presumably because of their desire for the bliss in material and immaterial spheres and Arahatsip. It is, of course, Arahatsip that can

help remove sensual craving. The desire for Arahantship as the motivation for doing good in the case of Anagami yogi is evident in the story of Ugga.

Ugga was a householder in Vesali city. The Buddha spoke of the eight wonderful attributes possessed by Ugga. In response to the inquiry by a monk about the Lord's reference to his attributes, Ugga said that he knew nothing about it but that he had eight distinctive qualities, which were as follows.

1. When he saw the Buddha for the first time, he concluded decisively that Gotama was the real, all-Enlightened Buddha.
2. He attained Anagami insight into the Four Noble Truths when he heard the Buddha's discourse. He observed the five precepts that included abstinence from sexual intercourse.
3. He had four young wives. He told them about his sexual abstinence and permitted them to return to their parents' homes or to marry the men of their own choice. At the request of his eldest wife, he willingly performed the wedding ceremony before giving her away to the man she loved.
4. He had resolved to spend all his wealth on giving alms to holy men of high moral character.
5. He approached the Bhikkhus respectfully.
6. He heard the Bhikkhus' sermon respectfully. He preached if the Bhikkhus did not give a sermon.
7. The devas came to him and said, "The doctrine of the Buddha is very good." He replied that the Dhamma was a good doctrine whether or not they said so about it. He did not feel conceited for his dialogue with the devas.
8. He found himself free from the first five attachments that lead to the lower, sensual worlds.

One day Ugga, the householder who possessed these eight qualities and had attained the Anagami stage on the path, offered food and robes, which he liked very much to the Buddha. The Lord commented on the nature of alms-giving as follows:

"One who offers anything that pleases him or that he prizes highly gets something which he adores. One who offers to the Aryan Noble who is of high moral character is doing an act of Dana that it is hard for ordinary people to do and therefore he gets what he wants very much."

Some years later, Ugga died and passed on to the Suddhavasa Brahma-world. Before long he came and paid respect to the Buddha. He said that he had attained

Arahatship that was indeed the object of his aspiration when he offered his much beloved food to the Lord in his previous existence. The Buddha again commented on the nature of kammic benefits of alms-giving - how the giver got what he prized most if he offered his much-prized object, how he attained a rare object if he offered rare things, how he attained to a much extolled stage if he offered much-extolled objects.

The moral of this story is that one may even attain Arahatship, the summum bonum of the holy life, as the kammic result of giving away one's much prized and precious objects. Ugga's alms giving was motivated by the desire for Arahatship and it is this desire, or kamupadana that formed his driving force. Some people may object to making the term kamupadana synonymous with the desire for Arahatship and label it rather kusalachanda (wholesome desire) but then they will have to explain what kind of upadana it is that gives rise to good acts of Ariya such as Dana, sila, etc.

## **Vipassana Practice And Upadana**

The practice of vipassana, too, is to be attributed to kamupadana of a person who seeks permanent deliverance from evils of existence. Ordinary people have to contemplate to be free from the four upadanas while the Ariyas have to contemplate to overcome kamupadana. Thus, vipassana practice stands for the conquest of upadana. According to Visuddhimagga and another commentary, viz., Sammohavinodani, avijja is indirectly the cause of good acts in that one has to do good for liberation from avijja and it is also said that bhávaná or vipassana practice is one of the good acts in the sensual world which one has to do for such liberation.

The question then arises as to whether vipassana practice can lead to rebirth. The commentaries on Anguttara Nikáya and Patthana point to such a possibility. According to the commentary on Anguttara Nikáya, the first three right views lead to good rebirth, the last two right views, viz., the view that is born of fruition on the path (phala-sammaditthi) and the view that results from vipassana practice tend to liberate the yogi from life-cycle (samsara). It says, however, on the authority of a learned thera (Culabhaya) that the yogi is subject to rebirth for seven times before he attains Arahatship. According to Patthana, contemplation of appamana (conditions of existence) leads to rebirth in sensual sphere, and the commentary defines appamana-cetana as maturity (gotrabhu cetana). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that vipassana practice can give rise to rebirth before Arahatship is won.

But vipassana can ensure freedom from samsara through insight into anicca, dukkha and anattá of all sense-objects - an insight that keeps off the defilement of craving for them. This non-arising of craving means non-arising of kamma and rebirth. Thus, vipassana insight helps to offset kamma and its samsaric consequences by tadangapahana (overcoming by opposite).

Moreover, through inductive generalization, the yogi realizes the anicca, dukkha and anattá of other phenomena that he has contemplated. Thus, he keeps off the defilements and their kammic potentials by repression (vikkhambhana pahana). Then, there follows the Aryan insight on the path that helps to root out the defilements. The emergence of this insight may be likened to the signing of an official letter by the head of a government department. The act of the officer-in-charge is, in fact, to give the finishing touch to the lot of work done by his subordinates. We cannot ignore the major contribution of vipassana practice in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment any more than we can ignore the work of office staff or the cumulative effect of repeated use of a saw that makes it finally possible for the woodcutter to exterminate the tree once and forever. As the sub-commentary on Visuddhimagga says:

"Transcendent insight on the path helps to stamp out, root and branch only the defilements which the yogi has done his utmost to overcome through mundane vipassana insight."

Those who do not contemplate, labor under the illusion of bliss and ego-entity. The illusion leads to craving, kammic efforts, rebirth and all the sufferings that are inherent in life cycle.

## **Life Cycle And Three Time Dimensions**

The doctrine of Paticcasamuppada describes twelve causes and effects viz., (1) ignorance, (2) kamma formations, (3) consciousness, (4) mind and body, (5) six senses, (6) sense-contact, (7) feeling, (8) craving, (9) clinging, (10) becoming (bhava), (11) birth (jati), (12) old age and death.

According to the doctrine, ignorance and craving are the two main sources of suffering. There are two life cycles, the anterior life cycle and the posterior life cycle. The anterior life cycle begins with ignorance as its main source and ends with feeling, while the posterior life cycle begins with craving and ends with death. In the former life-cycle, ignorance (avijja) and kamma formations (sankhárá) in the past life leads to rebirth, while in the latter life-cycle, craving (tanha) and clinging (upadana) cause rebirth in future. The two life cycles show how a man's lifetimes are linked with one another through cause and effect.

Again, if the doctrine of dependent origination is to be described on time-scale, avijja and sankhárá are two links in the past life, the links from vinnana to kammabhava concern the present life, while birth, old age and death are the links that future has in store for us. Thus, the doctrine refers to three time dimensions.

## **Five Causes In The Past**

The doctrine describes the past cause only in terms of avijja and sankhára but in point of fact avijja is invariably followed by tanha and upadana and sankhára too always lead to kammabhava. So Patisambhidamagga comments on the doctrine as follows.

"Avijja is ignorance that dominates us while doing a kammic deed. Sankhára means collection and exertion of effort. Tanha is the craving for the results of an action in the present life and hereafter. Upadana is obsession with action and its result. Kammabhava is volition. These five factors in the past constitute the cause of present rebirth."

Thus, we have to consider all these five links viz., avijja, tanha, upadana, sankhára and kammabhava if we are to describe the past cause fully. Of these, avijja, tanha and upadana are labeled kilesavatta (cycle or round of defilements). Sankhára and kammabhava are called kammavatta (cycle of actions). The commentary makes a distinction between sankhára and kammabhava, describing the prior effort, planning, etc., preparatory to an act as sankhára and the volition at the moment of doing the act as kammabhava. Thus, seeking money, buying things, etc., prior to an act of Dana comprise sankhára while the state of consciousness at the time of offering is kammabhava. Preliminary activities leading to an act of murder are sankhára while cetana or volition at the time of killing is kammabhava.

## **Distinction Between Sankhára And Kammabhava**

The other kind of distinction between sankhára and kammabhava is based on impulse-moments. It is said that an act of murder or alms giving involves seven impulse-moments. The first six impulse-moments are called sankhára while the last is termed kammabhava.

The third way of making the distinction is to describe volition (cetana) as kammabhava and other mental states associated with volition as sankhára.

The last method of classification is helpful when we speak of good deeds in rupa and arupa spheres. All the three methods apply in the case of good or bad acts in sensual world, but the first method is most illuminating for those who are not well informed.

Alternatively, Visuddhimagga attributes rebirth to flashbacks, visions and hallucinations that hold a dying person's attention at the last moment of his life. So according to this commentary, kammabhava may be defined as the volition (cetana) that motivated his good or bad acts in the past and the sankhára as the mental state conditioned by his deathbed experiences.

## **Present Effect Due To Past Cause**

Thus, owing to the rounds of defilements and kamma comprising the five causes in the past, there arises rebirth-consciousness together with mind-body, six bases, impressions and feeling. These five effects are collectively called vipaka vatta (round of effects). Because of their ignorance, common people have the illusion of pleasantness about every sense-object and mind-object. They develop craving, thereby starting again the vicious cycle of causes and effects that represent their rounds of suffering.

Consciousness, the six sense bases, etc., arise as the kammic result of past kammās. It is a matter of cause-and-effect relationship just like all other phenomena. This leaves no room for ego, God or Prime Mover. The only difference is the moral law governing this relationship, the nature of feeling, whether pleasant or unpleasant, being dependent on the good or bad sankhārá in the past. In reality there is no person who has pleasant or unpleasant feeling nor any being who causes him to have such an experience. Life is only the continuum of consciousness, impression, etc., as conditioned by five factors, viz., ignorance, craving, etc.

## **Knowledge For Vipassana Practice**

Those who have a smattering of Paticcasamuppada or Abhidhamma say that it is impossible to practice meditation without knowledge of these teachings. But, in fact the yogi who practices under the guidance of a learned teacher need not bother about higher Buddhist philosophy for he can follow the teacher's instructions if he knows only that life is a mental and physical process characterized by impermanence, suffering and insubstantiality. The adequacy of this simple knowledge to meet the intellectual need of the yogi who is bent on Arahantship is borne out by the Buddha in Culatanha-sankhaya Sutta. There the Lord goes on to talk about vipassana practice. In the Sutta, the yogi's understanding of nama-rupa is termed "abhijanati" which says the commentary; means, full comprehension and refers to nama-rupa paricchedanana and paccayapariggahanana.

Through contemplation, the yogi knows all phenomena analytically as anicca, dukkha and anattá (parijanati). Here, the Pali terms refer to sammasananana and other vipassana insights.

As regards Paticcasamuppada, knowledge of the conditionality and cause-effect relationship in life that rules out a being ego or self is sufficient. It is not necessary to know the twelve links or the twenty main points of the doctrine thoroughly. If the practice of vipassana presupposes such a comprehensive knowledge, it would be unthinkable for a man of low intelligence like, say, thera Cula paññá. The thera's memory was so poor that he could not remember a few gathas that he had learnt for

four months. Nevertheless, he attained Arahatsip in a few hours when he practiced contemplation as instructed by the Buddha.

Another laywoman, Matikamata by name, attained the third stage (Anagami) on the holy path in advance of some Bhikkhus who were her meditation teachers. She did not know much about Abhidhamma and Paticcasamuppada. There were many other yogis like this woman and Cula paññā thera. So it is possible for a yogi to attain the holy path if he contemplates even though he may not have thoroughly learnt the higher teachings of the Buddha.

Not to know the real nature of pleasant or unpleasant feeling is avijja (ignorance). It is tanha to like a sense-object and it is upadana to have craving for it. To seek the object of one's desire, to do good or evil for one's happiness or welfare in the present life or hereafter means sankhára and kammabhava. These five factors are the present causes and they give rise to rebirth after death. The doctrine of Paticcasamuppada mentions only three causes, viz., vedana, tanha and upadana but in reality these three factors imply two other causes, viz., avijja and sankhára since these two are the mainsprings of tanha and kammabhava respectively. So Patisambhidamagga describes all these five factors as causes of rebirth in future.

## Removing The Present Causes

Every good or evil act means the complete conjunction of these five present causes and occasions for such a conjunction in a single lifetime may number by thousands. Under certain circumstances these causes may lead to rebirth after death or two or three rebirths successively. Every existence is bound up with old age, grief, death, etc., and if we wish to avoid these sufferings, we will have to remove the present causes.

To this end we should note all physical phenomena, "seeing", "hearing", etc., at the moment of their arising. With the development of concentration, we note their instant passing away and become aware of their impermanence, un-satisfactoriness and unreliability. This awareness helps us to overcome ignorance and illusion that fuel craving, attachment and kammic effort: we thus keep the five present causes inoperative and inactive, thereby forestalling rebirth and consequent suffering.

This method of removing the causes is labeled "tadangapahana" - overcoming some defilements through contemplation. By this method, the yogi attains "tadanganibbuti" - partial extinction of defilements through contemplation. Later on, there arises the insight on the Aryan path, which means the extinction of all sankhára and the realization of Nibbána ("samucchedapahana").

The defilements and kammās are then done away with, once and forever. The yogis who attain sotapatti stage overcome the defilements and kammās that lead to the lower worlds, and those that may cause good rebirth for more than seven lifetimes,

the yogis at the Sakadagami stage overcome those that may cause more than two rebirths while the yogis at the Anagami stage remove those that lead to rebirth in sensual worlds. Finally, the yogi who attains arahatta stage eradicates the remaining defilements and kamma. In other words, he becomes an Arahata, the Noble one who is worthy of honor because he is wholly free from defilements.

## **Arahat's Outlook On Life**

The arahata has no illusion about the nature of sense-objects. He is aware of their unwholesomeness and this means he realizes the truth of dukkha because he is free from ignorance (avijja). So he has no craving for anything. Inevitably, he has to fill the biological needs of his physical body such as eating, sleeping, etc., but he regards them as conditioned (sankhára) dukkha and finds nothing that is pleasant to him.

The question arises as to whether he should long for speedy death to end such suffering. But the desire for early death or dissolution of the physical body too is a destructive desire and the Arahata is free from it. So there is an Arahata's saying in the Theragatha that he has neither the wish to die nor the wish to live.

The Arahata does not wish to live a long life for life means largely the burden of suffering inherent in khandha. Although the burden of khandha needs constant care and attention, it is not in the least reliable. To many middle-aged or old people, life offers little more than frustration, disappointment and bitterness. Living conditions go from bad to worse, physical health declines and there is nothing but complete disintegration and death that await us. Yet, because of ignorance and attachment many people take delight in existence. On the other hand, the Arahata is disillusioned and he finds life dreary and monotonous. Hence, his distaste for life.

But the Arahata does not prefer death either. For death wish is an aggressive instinct, which he has also conquered. What he wants is to attain Nibbána, a longing that is somewhat analogous to that of a worker who wishes to get his daily or monthly wage.

The worker does not like to face hardship and privations for he has to work inevitably just to make his living but he does not want to lose his job either. He wants only money and looks forward to payday. Likewise, the Arahata waits for the moment when he should attain Nibbána without anything left of his body-mind complex. So when they think of their life span, the Arahatas wonder how long they will have to bear the burden of nama-rupa khandha. Because of his disillusionment, the Arahata's life-stream is completely cut off after Nibbána, hence it is called "anupadisesanibbana".

## **Not Annihilation But Extinction Of Suffering**

Those who believe in ego or soul deprecate Nibbána as eternal death of a living being. In reality, it is the total extinction of suffering that results from the non-recurrence of psycho-physical phenomena together with their causes viz., kamma and defilements. So the Buddha points out the cessation of upadana arising from the complete cessation of craving, the process of becoming (bhava) ceasing to arise due to cessation of upadana and so on. With the non-arising of rebirth, there is the complete cessation of old age, death and other kinds of suffering.

Here, the popular view is that birth, old age and death are evils that afflict living beings but, in point of fact, these evils characterize only the psychophysical process and have nothing to do with a living entity. Since there is no ego or soul, it makes no sense to speak of the annihilation of a living being with the cessation of rebirth and suffering.

So those who regard Nibbána as annihilation are not free from the illusion of ego-entirety. To the intelligent Buddhist, Nibbána means only cessation of suffering. This is evident in the story of Bhikkhu Yamaka in the time of the Buddha.

### **Story Of Yamaka**

Yamaka believed that the Arahát was annihilated after his death. He clung to his view although other Bhikkhus pointed out its falsity. Then, Shariputra summoned him. Questioned by the elder therá, Yamaka admitted that all the five khandhas are impermanent and suffering, that it would be a mistake to regard them as one's possession or self. Shariputra told him to see the five khandhas as they really are. He would then become disillusioned, detached and liberated.

While hearing the sermon, Yamaka attained the sotápanna stage. He was now free from false beliefs. Shariputra then questioned him again. In response to the therá's questions, Yamaka said that he did not identify the Arahát with the physical body, the perception, the feeling, conformations (sankhárá) or the consciousness. Nor did he believe that the Arahát existed elsewhere without the rupa, vedana or any other khandha. Therefore, since the Arahát or a living entity is not to be found in the five khandhas even before death, it makes no sense to speak of the Arahát's annihilation after his parinibbána.

Yamaka confessed his mistaken view. He was now free from it and he knew what to say about the destiny of the Arahát. If someone were to ask him, "What happens when the Arahát passes away?", he would answer, "The death of the Arahát means the complete cessation of suffering inherent in the impermanent five khandhas."

This statement about the Arahát was confirmed by Shariputra. The therá likened the khandhas to the murderer who poses as a friend and said that identifying the khandhas with attá is like welcoming the murderer, etc.

Here, the thera Yamaka at first believed that the Arahant was annihilated after death, that there was nothing left. This belief presupposes the illusion of ego-entity and so the annihilation view of Nibbána is called *ucchedaditthi*, the view that Nibbána means the negation of *attá* after death. When he realized the truth and attained *sotápanna*, Yamaka said that the death of the Arahant means the complete extinction of suffering inherent in the impermanent five *khandhas*.

To sum up the way to the cessation of suffering, failure to note seeing, hearing and other psycho-physical phenomena leads to the arising of *avijja*, *tanha*, *upadana*, *kamma*, and *sankhárá* that in turn cause birth, old age and death in future. Mindfulness of all phenomena forestalls the five present causes viz., *avijja*, etc., and the five consequences that involve suffering.

## **Bhikkhuní Vajira On The Nature Of Khandhas**

Moreover, it is the extinction of suffering that is underscored in the famous saying of Bhikkhuní Vajira. While she was sitting under a tree near Jetavana monastery, Mara appeared and in order to scare and discomfit her, asked her, "Hey, Bhikkhuní! Who created a living being? Where is the creator? How did a living being originate and how would he come to an end?"

Bhikkhuní Vajira replied, "O, Mara! What do you think is a living being? Is not your belief in a living being an illusion? What you regard as a living being is nothing but a heap of *sankhárá*. No being is to be found in this heap, a living being (*sattava*) is merely a term for the collection of five *khandhas* viz., *rupa*, *vedana*, etc., just as "chariot" is the term for the combination of wheel, axle, etc.; there is no being but only the group of five *khandhas*: That cause suffering - in fact, it is only suffering (*dukkha*) that arises, exists and ends. There is no arising and extinction of anything other than *dukkha*."

Therefore, a living being is to be understood only in the popular acceptance of the term. It does not exist in the absolute sense; there is only the psycho-physical process which comprises ignorance, craving, attachment, *kamma* and *kammic* effort as causes and consciousness, body-mind, sense bases, impression and feeling as effects. These effects in turn become causes that give rise to rebirth and suffering.

## **Four Layers, Three Links And Twenty Factors**

*Paticcasamuppada* refers to four groups of factors involved in the chain of causation viz., the first group of causes in the past, the second group of effects in the present life, the third group of causes in the present and the last group of effects in the future. The groups are labeled "Sangha" or "sankhepa" in Pali. They may also be translated as layers.

There are three links for the four layers - the link between the past and the present involving *sankhárá* as cause and *vinnana* as effect, the link between the present

effect and present cause with vedana and tanha as cause and effect, and the third link between present cause and future with bhava as cause and jati (birth) as effect.

Then, there are twenty factors (akara) involved in the psychophysical process viz., five causes in the past, five effects in the present, five causes in the present and five effects in the future.

## Three Cycles

Again the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada deals with three cycles or rounds (vattas) viz., the cycles of defilements, kamma and fruits. The first cycle comprises ignorance, desire and attachment (upadana), the second (kamma cycle) comprises kammic effort and kammic existence (bhava), and the third vipaka cycle involves consciousness, mind-body, sense bases, impression and feeling.

The third vipaka cycle again leads to the cycle of defilement, the cycle of defilement again gives rise to kamma cycle and so on, each of the three cycles occurring one after another ceaselessly in a vicious circle. The three cycles form the samsaric round of suffering. Samsara means continuum of nama-rupa (psycho-physical) process occurring in terms of cause-effect relationship.

In order to liberate ourselves from the samsaric cycle of suffering, we do good deeds. We become familiar with the Buddha's teaching about the Four Noble Truths. We practice contemplation at the moment of seeing, hearing, etc. We realize the ceaseless arising and dissolution of psychophysical phenomena. This vipassana insight forestalls illusion and frees us from craving and attachment that leads to rebirth and suffering.

Visuddhimagga describes the contribution of kamma to the cycle of defilement. A certain yogi sees how mind-body complex is born of kammic cycle and vipaka (kammic fruits) cycle. He realizes that there are only kamma and its fruits: As a result of kamma in the past, there arise nama-rupa in the present life; nama-rupa is the cause of present kamma; it gives rise to kammic deeds in present life. These kammic deeds lead to rebirth. In this way there is the arising (becoming) of nama-rupa (being) without cessation.

Here, the arising or becoming of nama-rupa means the arising of phenomena from the senses e.g. seeing, hearing, etc. These lead to defilement, kamma, and rebirth successively. Thus, the nama-rupa process is conditioned by the cycle of kamma and its fruit. According to Visuddhimagga, this insight-knowledge means paccayapariggahanana and kankhavitarana visuddhi (Purity of Escape from all Doubt).

## **Four Aspects Of Paticcasamuppada**

There are four aspects of the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada that we should bear in mind. The first is the individual character of the psychophysical process that comprises the three successive existences. Although the doctrine stresses the conditionality of all phenomena, it is a mistake to believe that avijja, tanha and other causes concern one person, while vinnana, nama-rupa and other causes concern one person, and while vinnana, nama-rupa and other effects concern another person for this belief implies the total extinction of a living being after death, the annihilation - view which Buddhism rejects. In reality, the nama-rupa process is analogous to, say, the evolution of a mango tree. The mango seed becomes a seedling, the seedling turns into a young plant and the plant grows into a tree. Here the seed, the young plant and the tree form a continuous, unbroken line of cause and effect relationship so that strictly speaking, it is impossible to distinguish between the tree and the plant.

Likewise, avijja, sankhárá, vinnana, etc., occur in unbroken succession in terms of cause and effect and so it is reasonable to speak of a particular person involved in the process. It was Devadatta, for example, who committed schism and it is Devadatta who is now suffering in hell. The merchant Anathapindika did good deeds and it was he himself who landed in the deva-world after his death.

## **The False View Of Sati**

This identification of the doer of kammic deed with the bearer of its fruit makes it possible for us to avoid the annihilation-view. On the other hand, some people believe in the transmigration of a living being as a whole from one life to another. This mistaken view called sassataditthi (eternity-belief) was held by Bhikkhu Sati in the time of the Buddha.

It was the Jatakas that led Bhikkhu Sati to this view. He learnt how the Buddha identified himself with the leading characters in these birth stories. So he reasoned thus: the physical body of the bodhisattva disintegrated after his death and there was nothing of it that passed on to his last existence. It was only the consciousness that survived physical dissolution and that formed the hard core of the bodhisattva's personality in each of his existence. The same may be said of every other living being. Unlike the physical body, consciousness is not subject to disintegration. It passes on from one body to another and exists forever.

But the Jatakas underscore only the continuity of the cause and effect relationship in terms of the doer of kamma and the bearer of kammic fruit. They do not imply the transfer of vinnana or any other attribute intact from one life to another. Everything passes away but because of the causal connection, we have to assume that the hero of a Jataka story finally became Prince Siddhartha. So after questioning Sati, the

Buddha says that vinnana is conditioned, that it cannot arise in the absence of its relevant cause.

The Buddha cites the simile of a fire, which is designated according to its origin. The fire that originates with wood is called wood-fire that which starts with grass is called grass-fire and so on. Likewise, consciousness is conditioned by something and it is labeled according to that which conditions it. Thus, the consciousness that arises from eye and visual form is called visual consciousness (cakkhu-vinnana) that, which stems from ear and sound is called auditory consciousness (sota-vinnana) and so forth. In short, the consciousness is specified according to the sense-object and the sense organ, which together give rise to it. When the cause of a fire changes so does its designation. A grass-fire becomes a bush-fire when the fire spreads to the bush. In the same way, consciousness changes its label according to the sense-object and the sense organ on which it is dependent. In the case of the same sense-object and the same sense organ, too, it is the new consciousness that occurs at every moment in the mental process. Thus, to realize the truth about mental process is to be free from annihilation-belief whereas a false view of it leads to eternity-belief.

## **Distinctive Character Of Each Phenomenon**

Another aspect of the doctrine is the distinction between the different phenomena constituting the chain of causation. Thus avijja is a distinct phenomenon that conditions sankhára; sankhára is another different phenomenon that leads to rebirth and so on. To differentiate these phenomena is to realize their cause-and-effect relationship and this realization makes us free from eternity-belief. It helps us to do away with the illusion of a permanent, unchanging self that survives death and passes on to another existence.

In fact the eternity-belief or the annihilation-belief stems from the fact that people tend to over-emphasize either the connection between the mental states in two successive lives or the distinction between them. If we unintelligently identify ourselves with the nama-rupa in the present life and that in the previous life, we will be inclined to the belief in immortality. On the other hand, if we overstress the dichotomy of the nama-rupas, we are likely to fall into the trap of annihilation-view. The right attitude is to recognize the unbroken stream of nama-rupa that flows from one life to another in terms of cause and effect. This point of view gives us the impression of the individual character of nama-rupa and, as such, it clarifies the working out of kamma. It does not, however, imply the transfer of old nama-rupa or ego. It assumes the cessation of old nama-rupa and the arising of new nama-rupa in the present life on the basis of past kamma.

This view is crucial in vipassana practice. To the yogi who contemplates nama-rupa at every moment of their arising, these two aspects of the doctrine are apparent. He becomes aware of the stream of cause and effect comprising avijja, tanha, upadana

and so forth. He is aware of the continuity, and the uninterrupted flow of nama-rupa process and, therefore, he rejects the annihilation view completely.

Furthermore, being aware of the new phenomenon that arises whenever he contemplates, he discriminates between the sense-object and his consciousness. Contemplation brings to light feeling, craving, clinging, effort, consciousness, etc., as distinct phases of the mental process. And because he is well aware of the arising of new phenomena, he frees himself from eternity-belief.

## **Absence Of Effort (Avyapara)**

Another aspect of Paticcasamuppada is the absence of effort (avyapara). Avijja causes sankhára without striving and sankhára does not strive to create rebirth. Knowledge of this fact means insight into the non-existence of any agent or being (karaka-puggala) who hears, sees, etc., and as such it makes us free from ego-belief. But as Visuddhimagga says, it lends itself to misinterpretation and turns one into a moral skeptic who accepts determinism and denies moral freedom.

The non-volitional nature of conditioned psychophysical phenomena is apparent to the yogi who contemplates their ceaseless arising and dissolution for he realizes clearly that since nama-rupa is conditioned, his mind and body do not always act according to his desire.

## **Relevancy Of Cause To Effect**

The last aspect of Paticcasamuppada is the one-to-one correspondence between cause and effect (Evam dhammata). Every cause leads only to the relevant effect; it has nothing to do with the irrelevant effect. In other words, every cause is the sufficient and necessary condition for the corresponding effect. This fact leaves no room for belief in chance or moral impotency (akiriyaditthi) but, as Visuddhimagga says, for those who misunderstand it, it provides the basis for rigid determinism (niyatavada). As for the contemplating yogi, he clearly sees the relevancy of each effect to its cause and so he has no doubt about their one-to-one correspondence and the reality of moral freedom.

I have dwelt at length on noteworthy facts about Paticcasamuppada. These will be clear to the yogis who consider them on the basis of their experience but as the doctrine is profound, they will not be able to grasp some facts that are beyond their intellectual level. It is of course only the omniscient Buddha who knew everything thoroughly. The yogi should make it a point to know fully as far as possible within the scope of his intellect. To this end, he should learn from the discourses of Bhikkhus, reflect over what he has learnt and enrich his understanding through the practice of mindfulness.

Of the three methods of study, the third method (bhavanamaya) is the most important for the yogi who gains insight-knowledge by this method, attains the holy path and is liberated from the dangers of the lower worlds.

## Conclusion:

Now we will conclude the discourse on Paticcasamuppada with a commentary on Arahant, the chief attribute of the Buddha.

The formula about the dependent origination consists of twelve links beginning with ignorance and ending in death. It has ignorance and craving as two root-causes and two life cycles. The anterior cycle begins with ignorance and ends in feeling, while the posterior cycle begins with craving and ends in death and old age. Since anxiety, grief and the like do not occur in the Brahma world, they do not necessarily stem from birth (jati) and, as such, are not counted among the links of the dependent origination.

Furthermore, the anterior life cycle explicitly shows only avijja and sankhára; but avijja implies tanha-upadana and sankhára implies kammabhava. So all these five links form the past causes, while vinnana, nama-rupa, ayatana, phassa and vedana form the present effects. These vinnana, etc., are the wholesome or unwholesome kammic fruits that are clearly experienced at the moment of seeing, etc. The posterior life cycle directly concerns tanha, upadana and kammabhava but these three causes imply avijja and sankhára, and so as in the past avijja, tanha, upadana, sankhára and kammabhava represent the five present causes that lead to birth, old age and death in future. These effects are the same as those of vinnana, nama-rupa, etc. Thus, like the present effects, the future effects are also five in number.

So there are altogether four groups of layers of five past causes, five present effects, five present causes and five effects in the future. The layers represent three causal relations viz., the relation between the past causes and the present effects; the relation between the present effects and present causes; and the conditionality of phenomenal existence is evident in these layers or the twenty links of cause and effect which are termed “akara”. These links may be grouped in terms of vatta or cycles or rounds of defilements, viz., the cycle of defilements, the cycle of kamma and the cycle of kammic fruits which we have already explained before.

Those who have done good kammass pass through human, deva or Brahma worlds while those who have done evil are doomed to rebirth in the lower worlds. Living beings confined to life cycle (samsara) get the chance to do good only when they have a good teacher. A good teacher is hard to come by and so many people are largely prone to evil deeds and subject to their kammic effects in terms of suffering. It is then said that they are overtaken by Nemesis, that they have to pay for their round of kamma. Once established on the Aryan path, they cannot land in hell but as

for the cycle of kammic fruits, even the Buddhas and Arahats are not spared kammic retribution.

## **Cutting Off The Cycle Of Defilements**

If we wish to end the threefold cycle, we will have to remove its cause viz., the cycle of defilements. Defilements originate with seeing, hearing, etc., and so we must practice mindfulness to prevent their arising when we see, hear, etc. The practice of concentration and mindfulness makes the yogi aware of the impermanence and insubstantiality of all phenomena. This means he has no more illusion and is free from the cycle of defilements, kammass and kammic fruits.

Now, to sum up the way to the total conquest of the threefold cycle of defilement, kammass and kammic results with reference to the attributes of the Buddha.

## **Arahan And The Attributes Of The Buddha**

The Buddha's special designation is Arahan and this word points to the following attributes of the Buddha.

- (1) The Buddha was free from defilements. So were the Arahats but they were not free from the habits that continued to dominate them even after the attainment of their spiritual goal. This is evident in the story of Thera Pilindavaccha. Pilinda was an Arahat, beloved of the devas and extolled by the Buddha. Yet he was in the habit of addressing his fellow Bhikkhus or laymen rather rudely. Some Bhikkhus complained to the Buddha about the Thera's rudeness. The Buddha attributed this unpleasant habit to his having spent several lifetimes in the Brahmin families but said that being an Arahat, the Thera was pure and good at heart.

As for the Buddha, from the time of his attainment of supreme enlightenment, he became free from all the habits or hangovers of defilements that were carried over from past lives. This distinctive mark of the Buddha's Arahatship should be borne in mind when we contemplate the Lord's attributes. The complete extinction of cycles means total liberation from the three cycles of defilements, kamma and kammic fruits.

- (2) The Buddha was called Arahan because of his conquest of defilements. People fear only the external enemy such as robbers, snakes, etc. They do not bother about the internal enemy, that is, defilements that are more terrible. In point of fact, they have to suffer because of their mind-body complex and defilements. The root-cause is the defilements that give rise to repeated rebirths and sufferings. The defilements are ten in number viz., craving, hatred, ignorance, pride, illusion, doubt, lassitude, restlessness, shamelessness and lack of conscience.

- (3) By virtue of his outstanding moral integrity, wisdom and enlightenment, the Buddha was worthy of reverence and offerings. People who revered or made offerings to the Buddha have their wishes fulfilled.
- (4) Since he had conquered the defilements completely, the Buddha was pure at heart whether in public or solitude. Many people play the hypocrite, posing as good men or women in public but doing evil when there is no-one to see or hear them. In reality, there is no place where one can do evil secretly. Even though the evildoer is not seen by men and gods, he cannot help having qualms of conscience. His conscience is the most infallible witness to his misdeeds and it forms the basis for deathbed visions that point to unpleasant life that future has in store for him.

As for the Buddha, having wholly conquered all the defilements, his mind was always pure and he had absolutely no desire or intention to do evil either publicly or secretly.

- (5) The Buddha had destroyed the spokes of the wheel with the sword of the Arahantship. Here, the wheel means the cycle of life as described in the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada and the sword means the insight-knowledge of the Arahant. The axle of the wheel represents avijja, the root-cause; the fringe of the wheel stands for old age and death, while the spokes stand for the middle links, viz., sankhára, etc. Just as the removal of spokes makes it impossible for the wheel to move, so also the destruction of the middle links in the chain of conditioned phenomena means the end of the cycle of life.

## Story Of Baka Brahma

The first thing to do to end the life cycle is to remove its root-cause viz., ignorance, for ignorance is invariably followed by sankhára, vinnana, etc., down to jaramarana (old age and death). This is true in the sensual worlds as well as in the material world of Brahmas.

Once there was a great Brahma called Baka. He outlived many world-systems (kappa); indeed he lived so long that at last he forgot his previous existences and became convinced of his immortality without old age or death. The Buddha went to his abode to remove his illusion. The Brahma welcomed the Lord and bragged about his eternal life. The Buddha said that his ignorance was appalling in that he denied impermanence, old age and death. He revealed the good deeds that had led to the Brahma's longevity and it was this fabulous longevity that had made him oblivious of his previous lives and created the illusion of his immortality. On hearing this, Baka Brahma had second thoughts about his omnipotence. Still, he was conceited and in order to show his power, he tried to vanish out of sight of the Buddha and other Brahmas but it was in vain. Because of the power of the Lord, he remained visible.

Then the Buddha uttered the following verse:

Bhavevham bhayam disva bhavan ja vibhavesinam bhavam nabhivadim kinci nandincana upadiyim:

I do not extol any existence because I see danger in it. I have renounced the craving for existence because I am aware of its evil.

Baka Brahma and other Brahmas had lived so long that they considered their existence and their abode eternal. Likewise, the evils of life escape the notice of those who have the blessings of a good life such as health, wealth, prestige, success and so forth. But life is subject to suffering on all its three planes: sensual plane, material plane and immaterial plane. A Brahma or a rishi on the material or immaterial planes of existence may live for aeons but they too have to die eventually.

### **Sammāsambuddha**

It is insight knowledge that leads to the destruction of ignorance, which is the root-cause of suffering. For the Buddha, this means the attribute of sammāsambuddha. Sammāsambuddha is one who knows the Four Noble Truths rightly, thoroughly and independently. Here the twelve links of Paticcasamuppada may be differentiated in terms of the Four Noble Truths.

Thus, old age and death together means the first truth of suffering and rebirth means the truth about the cause of suffering. The cessation of this cause and this effect means the truth about the cessation (nirodha) and, knowledge of this cessation means the truth about the path to it (Magga).

The same may be said of rebirth and kammic cause, kammic cause and clinging, clinging and craving, craving and feeling, feeling and contact, contact and six senses, the senses and nama-rupa, nama-rupa and consciousness, consciousness and sankhārá, and sankhārá and ignorance. In short, what immediately precedes a link is termed its cause (samudaya) and what immediately follows is called its effect (dukkha sacca). We can even make ignorance (avijja), the origin of life-cycle, synonymous with truth about suffering (dukkha sacca); if we regard it as an effect of the attachment (asava) viz., attachment to sensual pleasure, existence, belief and ignorance.

Here, the identification of tanha with dukkha may not be acceptable to some people. But it is reasonable if we remember the fact that all nama-rupa including tanha means dukkha since it is subject to impermanence. The commentary does not describe avijja as dukkha, but we can say it is dukkha arising from asava (biases). There are four asavas that have their sources in sensual craving, attachment to life, false belief and ignorance. It is a matter of ignorance in the past again giving rise to ignorance in the present. Hence, the asavas may be regarded as the cause of avijja.

So having realized the Four Noble Truths and attained Nibbána, through his own enlightenment, the Buddha earned the unique and glorious title of Sammasambuddha. He knew that all the phenomena covered by the doctrine of Paticcasamuppada are the real dukkha and the causes of dukkha. He was disenchanted, had no attachment and achieved liberation from all fetters. So according to Visuddhimagga, he was called Arahan because he managed to destroy completely all the supports of the wheel of life.

## **The Fame Of The Buddha**

The fame of the Buddha pervaded the whole universe. It spread to all parts of the universe through the inhabitants of some realms who came to hear the Buddha's sermons or through the sermons, which the Buddha himself gave in some realms or through the former disciples who had landed in some higher realms after hearing the sermons.

We need not dwell on the first way in which the fame of the Buddha spread. As regards the other two ways, in the course of his long wanderings in samsara, the bodhisattva had been to all the realms except the five-suddhavasa realms, which are meant only for those who have attained Anagami stage. The bodhisattva usually attains all the four stages on the path only in his last existence. So the Buddha had never been to suddhavasa realm before and on one occasion he paid a visit to it by means of his psychic powers. On arriving there, he received the homage of millions of Brahmas, who told him about the former Buddhas and their landing in suddhavasa realm as the result of their attainment of Anagami stage. Among these Brahmas, there were also those who had practiced the Dhamma as disciples of Gotama Buddha.

The Buddha visited all the five-suddhavasa realms. It is easy to see how he became famous in the realms that were the abodes of his former disciples. But the question arises as to how his fame spread to the formless (arupa) realms. It was not possible for the formless Brahmas to come to the Buddha or for the Buddha to go to them. Those who practiced the Buddha-Dhamma in the sensual or the material world, attaining the first three stages on the path and dying with arupa (formless) jhana might land in the formless worlds if they so desired. These noble ones were aware of the sublime attributes of the Buddha and the possibility of attaining new insights through the practice of mindfulness. So through mindfulness of all mental events, they finally became Arahats and passed away in vinnanancayatana realm or akincannayatana realm or the highest realm called Nevasannanasannayatana. In this way, the fame of the Buddha spread throughout the whole universe.

## **The Four Noble Truths In Brief**

We have dealt in detail with the Buddha's knowledge of the Four Noble Truths vis-à-vis his attribute of Sammasambuddha. We will now repeat the four truths briefly. According to the scriptures, all the nama-rupa in the sensual, material and immaterial worlds, exclusive of tanha, constitute dukkha. This is the first truth. Tanha as the cause of dukkha is the second truth. Nibbána as the cessation of dukkha is the third truth, and the Aryan path as the way to cessation is the fourth truth. These Four Noble Truths are realized experientially by the yogi through the practice of vipassana. From experience he knows that all that is arising and passing away mean dukkha, attachment to them is the cause, that cessation of both the dukkha and its cause is Nibbána, and that its attainment is the path.

## **Sammasambuddha And Buddhahood**

Both of the two Pali terms viz., Buddha and Sammasambuddha mean omniscience or knowledge of all the Dhammas. This raises the question of how to make a distinction between the two attributes connected by the two terms. By the attribute of sammasambuddha, we are to understand that the bodhisattva attained Buddhahood on the basis of independent reflection, and effort and the realization of the Four Noble Truths through insight on the path of Arahatsip. Buddhahood means the thorough and exhaustive knowledge of all the conditioned and the unconditioned Dhammas on the basis of the unique attributes possessed by the Buddha such as omniscience (sabbannutanana), etc.

These unique attributes of the Buddha consist in knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, four kinds of analytical knowledge and six kinds of knowledge that are not to be found among disciples (asadharananana). The six asadharananana are: (1) knowledge of the different moral and spiritual levels of living beings, (2) knowledge of the desires, inclinations and latent tendencies (anusaya) of living beings, (3) the power to create super-miracles (yamakapatihariyanana), (4) infinite compassion for all living beings, (5) omniscience, and (6) knowledge without any hindrance or obstruction of anything which the Buddha wants to know and which he brings into the focus of his attention.

Now a few words about the conditioned (sankhárá) and unconditioned (asankhara) Dhammas. The sankhárás are the nama-rupa or the five aggregates of khandhas that arise owing to the harmonious combination of relevant factors. In other words, they are the phenomena conditioned by favorable circumstances. Thus, sound is produced when there is friction between two hard objects such as sticks or iron bars. Here sound is sankhárá. As opposed to sankhárá is asankhara, which has nothing to do with causes. The only ultimate reality (paramattha) in the category of asankhara Dhammas is Nibbána. Of the non-paramattha asankharas there are many kinds of names such as names of shapes, figures and so forth.

The Buddha's sabbannutanana is so called because it encompasses the whole range of conditioned and unconditioned Dhammas. It is also described in terms of the five-neyyadhamma viz., the sankhárá, the distinctive qualities of certain rupas (nipphanna), the conditioned characteristics of nama-rupa, Nibbána and names.

The first two attributes of the Buddha forming the knowledge of the different spiritual levels, inclinations and latent tendencies of living beings are labeled Buddha-eye (Buddha-cakkhu). With this all-seeing eye, the Buddha chose the living beings who ought to be enlightened, and preached to them the appropriate Dhamma at the appropriate moment.

We conclude the discourse on the Paticcasamuppada with the commentary on the attributes of the Buddha (Arahan) because we wish to inspire the readers with faith in the Blessed One. We hope that they will find the source of inspiration too, in the Arahats who also possess the Arahan attribute. The Arahat is wholly free from defilements, he has destroyed the framework of life cycle; there is no secret place where he will do evil and so he is worthy of honor. These are the qualities that make up his Arahan attribute although this attribute as possessed by the ordinary Arahat is below the superlative Arahan attribute of the Buddha.

So you should try to overcome defilements through mindfulness of the nama-rupa processes that arise at the six sense-doors, destroy the supports of the wheel of life and keep your mind pure all the time in order that you may eventually become Arahats and earn the glorious title of Arahan.

## Summary:

From the two root-causes referred to in the two noble truths there arise four layers, three cycles, three connections, twelve links, three time-dimensions, twenty phenomena and five nama-rupa processes. One who watches these present resultant processes effectively does not have craving that is rooted in feeling and so he will put an end to life cycle completely. In other words, the yogi watches every psychophysical event that occurs at the six senses clearly in terms of its impermanence, un-satisfactoriness and ego-less-ness.

Through such effective practice of mindfulness, the yogi gains insight into the nature of the sense-object such as sound, visual form, etc., and overcomes the attachment to it by the opposite (tadanga), that is, he overcomes it by opposing it with the knowledge that undercuts it. The cessation of attachment rules out the arising of the other phenomena e.g. clinging, process of becoming, rebirth, etc.

After this cessation through vipassana insight, the yogi overcomes the latent attachment completely through destruction (samuccheda) when he attains the

insight knowledge on the Aryan path. At this moment the other phenomena e.g. clinging, etc., also become totally extinct.

There is no teaching, which says that with the extinction of feeling, craving too ceases to exist. This is no wonder for even the Arahats do not have any control over their feelings that arise from contact with the six senses.

There are certain psycho-physical phenomena that have to be watched and noted as they really are i.e. in terms of anicca, dukkha and anattá if the yogi wants to remove the present causes such as tanha etc., the future results and end the cycle of suffering. These phenomena with their Pali terms are explained below.

- (1) **Vinnana:** consciousness, which is of six kinds viz., eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness.
- (2) **Nama:** mental factors (cetasikas) that arise together with consciousness. Rupa: the physical phenomena that arises together with that consciousness. Nama-rupa may be translated as mind and matter.
- (3) **Salayatana:** the six bases of mental activity, that is, the six internal bases comprising the consciousness and the five physical sense-organs viz., eye, ear, nose, tongue and body and the six external bases viz., visible object, sound, odor, sap or gustative object, body-impression and mind-object.
- (4) **Phassa:** contact or impression, which is of six kinds viz., visual impression, impression of hearing, of smelling, of tasting, bodily impression and mental impression.
- (5) **Vedana:** feelings, which are of three kinds viz., pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling and indifferent feeling. We may also distinguish six kinds of feelings: feelings associated with seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, body-impression and mental impression.

### 1. Two root-causes:

Ignorance (avijja) and craving (tanha).

### 2. Two truths:

Truth about the cause (craving) and truth about suffering (dukkha).

### 3. Four layers:

- (1) The layer of the past cause - ignorance, kamma formations (sankhárá), craving, clinging and becoming.
- (2) The layer of present result - consciousness, mind-body complex, six bases of mental activity, impression, feeling.
- (3) The layer of present cause - craving, clinging, kamma, becoming, ignorance, kamma formations (sankhárá).

(4) Future result - birth, old age, death, consciousness, etc.

**4. Three cycles:**

- (1) The cycle of defilements - ignorance, craving, clinging.
- (2) The cycle of kamma - kamma formations (sankhárá), kamma and becoming.
- (3) The cycle of kammic results - consciousness, mind-body complex, six bases of mental activity, impression, feeling, birth, old age and death.

**5. Three connections:**

- (1) The connection between the past kamma formations (sankhárá) as the past cause and consciousness as the present result.
- (2) The connection between feeling as the present result and craving as the present cause.
- (3) The connection between becoming as the present cause and birth as the future result.

**6. Twelve links:**

(1) ignorance (2) kamma formations (3) consciousness (4) mental and physical phenomena (5) six bases (6) impression (7) feeling (8) craving (9) clinging (10) becoming (11) rebirth (12) old age and death

**7. Three time-dimensions:**

- (1) The infinite past - ignorance and kamma formations.
- (2) The infinite present - consciousness, mind-body complex, six bases, impression, feeling, craving, clinging, kamma-process.
- (3) The infinite future - rebirth, old age and death.

**8. Twenty elements:**

- (1) Five elements of the causative process in the past existence.
- (2) Five elements of the resultant process in the present existence.
- (3) Five elements of the causative process in the present existence.
- (4) Five elements of the resultant process in the future existence.