

The Nibbāna Sermons 12 to 22 by Bhikkhu K Ñāṇananda

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Sermon 22

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho
sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction". With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the twentysecond sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

We made an attempt, in our last sermon, to explain that the comparison of the emancipated one in this dispensation to the great ocean has a particularly deep significance. We reverted to the simile of the vortex by way of explanation. Release from the *saṃsāric* vortex, or the breach of the vortex of *saṃsāra*, is comparable to the cessation of a whirlpool. It is equivalent to the stoppage of the whirlpool of *saṃsāra*.

Generally, what is known as a vortex or a whirlpool, is a certain pervert, unusual or abnormal activity, which sustains a pretence of an individual existence in the great ocean with a drilling and churning as its centre. It is an aberration, functioning according to a duality, maintaining a notion of two things. As long as it exists, there is the dichotomy between a 'here' and a 'there', oneself and another. A vortex reflects a conflict between an 'internal' and an 'external' - a 'tangle within' and a 'tangle without'. The cessation of the vortex is the freedom from that duality. It is a solitude born of full integration.

We happened to discuss the meaning of the term *kevalī* in our last sermon. The cessation of a vortex is at once the resolution of the conflict between an internal and an external, of the tangle within and without. When a vortex ceases, all those conflicts subside and a state of peace prevails. What remains is the boundless great ocean, with no delimitations of a 'here' and a 'there'. As is the great ocean, so is the vortex now.

This suchness itself indicates the stoppage, the cessation or the subsidence of the vortex. There is no longer any possibility of pointing out a 'here' and a 'there' in the case of a vortex that has ceased. Its 'thusness' or 'suchness' amounts to an acceptance of the reality of the great ocean. That 'thus-gone' vortex, or the vortex that has now become 'such', is in every respect worthy of being called *tathāgata*.

The term *tādī* is also semantically related to this suchness. The *tathāgata* is sometimes referred to as *tādī* or *tādiso*, "such-like". The 'such-like' quality of the *tathāgata* is associated with his unshakeable deliverance of the mind. His mind remains unshaken before the eight worldly vicissitudes.

Why the Buddha refused to give an answer to the tetralemma concerning the after-death state of the *tathāgata*, should be clear to a great extent by those *sutta* quotations we brought up in our last sermon. Since the quotation *diṭṭheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne*, "when a *tathāgata* is not to be found in truth and fact here in this very life", leads to the inference that a *tathāgata* is not to be found in reality even while he is alive, we were forced to conclude that the question 'what happens to the *tathāgata* after his death?' is utterly meaningless.

It is also obvious from the conclusive statement, *pubbe cāhaṃ etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ* - "formerly as well as now I make known just suffering and the cessation of suffering" - that the Buddha, in answering this question, completely put aside such conventional terms like 'being' and 'person', and solved the problem on the basis of the four noble truths, which highlight the pure quintessence of the *Dhamma* as it is.

We have to go a little deeper into this question of conventional terms like 'being' and 'person', because the statement that the *tathāgata* does not exist in truth and fact is likely to drive fear into the minds of the generality of people. In our last sermon, we gave a clue to an understanding of the sense in which this statement is made, when we quoted an extraordinary new etymology, the Buddha had advanced, for the term *satta* in the *Rādhasaṃyutta*.

Rūpe kho, Rādha, yo chando yo rāgo yā nandī yā taṇhā, tatra satto, tatra visatto, tasmā 'satto 'ti vuccati. "Rādha, that desire, that lust, that delight, that craving in form with which one is attached and thoroughly attached, therefore is one called a 'being'."

Translation Bodhi (2012: 985):

“One is stuck, Rādha, tightly stuck, in desire, lust, delight, and craving for form; therefore one is called a being. One is stuck, tightly stuck, in desire, lust, delight, and craving for feeling ... for perception ... for volitional formations ... for consciousness; therefore one is called a being.”

“Being defiled by attachment to and entangled with bodily form — this is called a living being. Being defiled by attachment to and entangled with feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness — this is called a living being .”

Here the Buddha has punned on the word *satta*, to give a new orientation to its meaning, that is, *rūpe satto visatto*, "attached and thoroughly attached to form".

From prehistoric times, the word *satta* was associated with the idea of some primordial essence called *sat*, which carried with it notions of permanent existence in the world. As derivatives from the present participle *sant* and *sat*, we get the two words *satya* and *sattva* in Sanskrit. *Satya* means "truth", or what is "true". *Sattva* means a "being" or the "state of being". We might even take *sattva* as the place from which there is a positive response or an affirmation of a state of being.

Due to the semantic affinity between *satya*, "truth", and *sattva*, "being", an absolute reality had been granted to the term *sattva* from ancient times. But according to the new etymology advanced by the Buddha, the term *sattva* is given only a relative reality within limits, that is to say, it is 'real' only in a limited and a relative sense. The above quotation from the *Rādhasamyutta* makes it clear that a being exists only so long as there is that desire, lust, delight and craving in the five aggregates.

Alternatively, when there is no desire, or lust, or delight, or craving for any of the five aggregates, there is no 'being'. That is why we say that it is real only in a limited and relative sense.

When a thing is dependent on another thing, it is relative and for that very reason it has a limited applicability and is not absolute. Here, in this case, the dependence is on desire or attachment. As long as there is desire or attachment, there is a 'being', and when it is not there, there is no 'being'. So from this we can well infer that the *tathāgata* is not a 'being' by virtue of the very definition he had given to the term *satta*.

The other day, we briefly quoted a certain simile from the *Rādhasutta* itself, but could not explain it sufficiently. The Buddha gives this simile just after advancing the above new definition.

"Suppose, *Rādha*, some little boys and girls are playing with sandcastles. So long as their lust, desire, love, thirst, passion and craving for those things have not gone away, they remain fond of them, they play with them, treat them as their property and call them their own. But when, *Rādha*, those little boys and girls have outgrown that lust, desire, love, thirst, passion and craving for those sandcastles, they scatter them with their hands and feet, demolish them, dismantle them and render them unplayable."

When we reflect upon the meaning of this simile from the point of view of *Dhamma*, it seems that for those little boys and girls, sandcastles were real

things, as long as they had ignorance and craving with regard to them. When they grew wiser and outgrew craving, those sandcastles became unreal. That is why they destroyed them.

The untaught worldling is in a similar situation. So long as he is attached to these five aggregates and has not comprehended their impermanent, suffering-fraught and not-self nature, they are real for him. He is bound by his own grasping.

The reality of the law of *kamma*, of merit and demerit, follows from that very grasping. The dictum *upādānapaccayā bhavo*, "dependent on grasping is existence", becomes meaningful in this context. There is an existence because there is grasping. But at whatever point of time wisdom dawned and craving faded away, all those things tend to become unreal and there is not even a 'being', as there is no real 'state of being'.

This mode of exposition receives support from the *Kaccāyanagottasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The way the Buddha has defined right view in that discourse is highly significant. We have already discussed this *sutta* on an earlier occasion. Suffice it to remind ourselves of the basic maxim.

'Dukkham eva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati, dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhatī'ti na kaṅkhati na vicikicchati aparappaccayā ñāṇaṃ ev' assa ettha hoti. Ettāvataṃ kho, Kaccāyana, sammā diṭṭhi hoti.

"It is only suffering that arises and suffering that ceases. Understanding thus, one does not doubt, one does not waver, and there is in him only the knowledge that is not dependent on another. It is in so far, *Kaccāyana*, that one has right view."

Translation Bodhi (2000: 544):

“He has no perplexity or doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing. His knowledge about this is independent of others. It is in this way, *Kaccāna*, that there is right view.”

SĀ 301

苦生而生，苦滅而滅，於彼不疑、不惑，不由於他而自知，是名正見」

(CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 85, c24

What is called *aparappaccayā ñāṇa* is that knowledge of realization by oneself for which one is not dependent on another. The noble disciple wins to such a knowledge of realization in regard to this fact, namely, that it is only a question of suffering and its cessation. The right view mentioned in this context is the supramundane right view, and not that right view which takes *kamma* as one's own, *kammassakatā sammā diṭṭhi*, implying notions of 'I' and 'mine'.

This supramundane right view brings out the norm of *Dhamma* as it is. Being unable to understand this norm of *Dhamma*, contemporary ascetics and brahmins, and even some monks themselves, accused the Buddha of being an

annihilationist. They brought up groundless allegations. There was also the opposite reaction of seeking refuge in a form of eternalism, through fear of being branded as annihilationists.

Sometimes the Buddha answered those wrong accusations in unmistakable terms. We come across such an instance in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. First of all the Buddha qualifies the emancipated one in his dispensation with the terms *ariyo pannaddhajo pannabhāro visamṃyutto*. Once the conceit 'am', *asmimāna*, is abandoned, this noble one is called *pannaddhajo*, "one who has put down the flag of conceit". He has "laid down the burden", *pannabhāro*, and is "disjoined", *visamṃyutto*, from the fetters of existence. About this emancipated one, he now makes the following declaration:

Evam vimuttacittaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ sa-indā devā sa-pajāpatikā sa-brahmakā anvesaṃ nādhigacchanti: idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññāṇan'ti. Taṃ kissa hetu? Diṭṭhe vāhaṃ, bhikkhave, dhamme tathāgato ananuvejjo'ti vadāmi.

Evamvādiṃ kho maṃ, bhikkhave, evam akkhāyiṃ eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā asatā tucchā musā abhūtena abbhācikkhanti: venayiko samaṇo Gotamo, sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpeti.

"A monk, thus released in mind, O! monks, gods including *Indra*, *Pajāpati* and *Brahmā*, are unable to trace in their search to be able to say of him: 'the consciousness of this thus-gone-one is dependent on this. And why is that so? Monks, I say, even here and now the *Tathāgata* is not to be found.

When I say thus, when I teach thus, some recluses and brahmins wrongly and falsely accuse me with the following unfounded allegation: 'recluse *Gotama* is an annihilationist, he lays down an annihilation, a destruction and non-existence of a truly existing being'."

Translation Ñāṇamoli (1995: 233):

"Bhikkhus, when the gods with *Indra*, with *Brahmā* and with *Pajāpati* seek a bhikkhu who is thus liberated in mind, they do not find [anything of which they could say]: 'The consciousness of one thus gone is supported by this.' Why is that? One thus gone, I say, is untraceable here and now."

"So saying, bhikkhus, so proclaiming, I have been baselessly, vainly, falsely, and wrongly misrepresented by some recluses and brahmins thus: 'The recluse *Gotama* is one who leads astray; he teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the extermination of an existing being.'

MĀ 200

"*Indra* with his *devas*, *Īsāna*, and *Brahmā* with his assembly seek a basis on which the consciousness of a *Tathāgata* depends, but are unable to find one. A *Tathāgata* has become *Brahmā*, a *Tathāgata* has become cool, a *Tathāgata* is without heat, a *Tathāgata* is not otherwise, it is like this, I say.

“Renunciants and brahmins misrepresent me, saying what is false and untrue, namely: “The renunciant Gotama proclaims annihilation. He proclaims the cutting off and destruction of a truly existing living being.”

“I do not make proclamations about what, in this context, is [in any case] devoid of self. I do, [however], proclaim the thus-gone one to be without worry right here and now.”

As in the *Anurādha Sutta*, here too the Buddha concludes with the highly significant statement of his stance, *pubbe cāhaṃ etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*, "formerly as well as now I make known just suffering and the cessation of suffering".

Though the statements in the *suttas* follow this trend, it seems that the commentator himself was scared to bring out the correct position in his commentary. The fact that he sets out with some trepidation is clear enough from the way he tackles the term *tathāgata* in his commentary to the above discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In commenting on the word *tathāgatassa* in the relevant context, he makes the following observation:

Tathāgatassā'ti ettha satto pi tathāgato'ti adhippeto, uttamapuggalo khīṇāsavo pi. "Tathāgata's, herein, a being also is meant by the term *tathāgata*, as well as the highest person, the influx-free *arahant*."

Anālayo 2017: "Some Renditions of the Term Tathāgata in the Chinese *Āgamas*", *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University*, 20: 11–21. (esp. p. 13f)

Just as he gives two meanings to the word *tathāgata*, Venerable *Buddhaghosa* attributes two meanings to the word *anānuvejjo* as well. *Anānuvejjo'ti asaṃvijjamāno vā avindeyyo vā. Tathāgato'ti hi satte gahite asaṃvijjamāno'ti attho vaṭṭati, khīṇāsavo gahite avindeyyo'ti attho vaṭṭati.* "Anānuvejjo - 'non-existing' or 'untraceable'. When by the word *tathāgata* a being is meant, the sense 'non existing' is fitting; and when the influx-free one is meant, the sense 'untraceable' is fitting."

According to this exegesis, the term *tathāgata* in contexts where it means a 'being' is to be understood as non-existing, *asaṃvijjamāno*, which is equivalent in sense to the expression *anupalabbhiyamāne*, discussed above. On the other hand, the other sense attributed to it is *avindeyyo*, which somehow grants the existence but suggests that it is 'untraceable'. In other words, the *Tathāgata* exists, but he cannot be traced or found out.

The commentator opines that the term in question has to be understood in two different senses, according to contexts. In order to substantiate his view, the commentator attributes the following apocryphal explanation to the Buddha.

Bhikkhave, ahaṃ ditṭheva dhamme dharamānakaṃ yeva khīṇāsavaṃ viññāṇavasena indādīhi avindiyaṃ vadāmi. Na hi sa-indā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā anvesantāpi khīṇāsavassa vipassanācittaṃ vā maggacittaṃ vā phalacittaṃ vā, idaṃ nāma ārammaṇaṃ nissāya vattatī'ti jānituṃ sakkonti. Te appaṭisandhikassa parinibbutassa kiṃ jānissanti?

"Monks, I say that even here and now the influx-free one, while he is alive, is untraceable by *Indra* and others in regard to his consciousness. Gods, including *Indra*, *Brahmā* and *Pajāpati* are indeed unable in their search to find out either the insight consciousness, or the path consciousness, or the fruition consciousness, to be able to say: 'it is dependent on this object'. How then could they find out the consciousness of one who has attained *parinibbāna* with no possibility of conception?"

Presumably, the argument is that, since the consciousness of the *arahant* is untraceable by the gods while he is alive, it is all the more difficult for them to find it out when he has attained *parinibbāna*. That is to say, the *arahant* somehow exists, even after his *parinibbāna*, only that he cannot be traced.

It is obvious from this commentarial trend that the commentator finds himself on the horns of a dilemma, because of his inability to grasp an extremely deep dimension of linguistic usage. The Buddha's forceful and candid declaration was too much for him. Probably, he demurred out of excessive faith, but his stance is not in accordance with the *Dhamma*. It falls short of right view.

Let us now recapitulate the correct position in the light of the above *sutta* passage. The Buddha declares at the very outset that the emancipated monk undergoes a significant change by virtue of the fact that he has abandoned the conceit 'am'. That *Tathāgata*, that emancipated monk, who has put down the flag of conceit, laid down the burden of the five aggregates, and won release from the fetters to existence, defies definition and eludes categorization. Why is that?

As we pointed out earlier, the word *asmi* constitutes the very basis of the entire grammatical structure. *Asmi*, or "am", is the basic peg, which stands for the first person. The second person and the third person come later. So *asmi* is basic to the grammatical structure. When this basic peg is uprooted, the emancipated monk reaches that state of freedom from the vortex. There is no dichotomy to sustain a vortex, no two teams to keep up the vortical interplay. Where there is no turning round, there is no room for designation, and this is the implication of the phrase *vaṭṭaṃ tesam n'atthi paññāpanāya*, which we happened to quote on a previous occasion. For the *arahants* there is no vortex whereby to designate.

That is why the *Tathāgata*, in this very life, is said to have transcended the state of a 'being'. Only as a way of speaking in terms of worldly parlance one cannot help referring to him as a 'being'. But in truth and fact, his position is otherwise.

Going by worldly usage, one might indiscriminately think of applying the four propositions of the tetralemma to the *Tathāgata* as well. But it is precisely in this context that the questioner's presumptions are fully exposed. The fact that he has misconceived the implications of the terms *satta* and *Tathāgata* is best revealed by the very question whether the *Tathāgata* exists after his death. It shows that he presumes the *Tathāgata* to be existing in truth and fact, and if so, he has either to go on existing or be annihilated after death. Here, then, we have an extremely deep dimension of linguistic usage.

The commentary says that gods and *Brahmās* cannot find the *Tathāgata* in point of his consciousness. The *Tathāgata* defies definition due to his abandonment of proliferations of cravings, conceits and views. Cravings, conceits and views, which bring in attachments, bindings and entanglements to justify the usage of terms like *satta*, 'being', and *puggala*, 'person', are extinct in the *Tathāgata*. That is why he is beyond reckoning.

In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* the Buddha makes the following declaration about himself, after refuting the sixty-two views, catching them all in one super-net.

Ucchinnabhavanettiko, bhikkhave, tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yav'assa kāyo ṭhassati tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. Kāyassa bheda uddham jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā.

"Monks, the *Tathāgata's* body stands with its leading factor in becoming cut off at the root. As long as his body stands, gods and men will see him. With the breaking up of his body, after the extinction of his life, gods and men will not see him."

And then he follows up this promulgation with a simile.

Seyyathā pi, bhikkhave, ambapiṇḍiyā vaṇṭacchinnāya yāni kānici ambāni vaṇṭūpanibandhanāni, sabbāni tāni tad anvayāni bhavanti, evam eva kho, bhikkhave, ucchinnabhavanettiko tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yav'assa kāyo ṭhassati tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. Kāyassa bheda uddham jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā.

"Just as, monks, in the case of a bunch of mangoes, when its stalk is cut off, whatever mangoes that were connected with the stalk would all of them be likewise cut off, even so, monks, stands the *Tathāgata's* body with its leading factor in becoming cut off at the root. As long as his body stands, gods and men will see him. With the breaking up of his body, after the extinction of his life, gods and men will not see him."

Translation Walshe (1987: 90):

"Monks, the body of the Tathagata stands with the link that bound it to becoming cut. As long as the body subsists, *devas* and humans will see him. But at the breaking-up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-span, *devas* and humans will see him no more. Monks, just as when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes has been cut, all the mangoes on it go with it, just so the Tathagata's

link with becoming has been cut. As long as the body subsists, *devas* and humans will see him. But at the breaking-up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-span, *devas* and humans will see him no more.”

DĀ 21

“The Tathāgata knows that for himself birth and death have been eradicated. He makes use of this existing body because of his wish to bring happiness and deliverance to *devas* and human beings. If there were not that body, *devas* and men in the world would have nothing to rely on. It is just like a Palmyra tree whose top part has been cut off, which will not come to growth again. The Buddha is just like that, having eradicated birth and death he will never come to be born again.”

The simile employed serves to bring out the fact that the *Tathāgata's* body stands with its leading factor in becoming eradicated. Here it is said that gods and men see the *Tathāgata* while he is alive. But the implications of this statement should be understood within the context of the similes given.

The reference here is to a tree uprooted, one that simply stands cut off at the root. In regard to each aggregate of the Buddha and other emancipated ones, it is clearly stated that it is cut off at the root, *ucchinnamūlo*, that it is like a palm tree divested of its site *tālāvatthukato*.

In the case of a palm tree, deprived of its natural site but still left standing, anyone seeing it from afar would mistake it for an actual tree that is growing. It is the same idea that emerges from the simile of the bunch of mangoes. The *Tathāgata* is comparable to a bunch of mangoes with its stalk cut off.

What then is meant by the statement that gods and men see him? Their seeing is limited to the seeing of his body. For many, the concept of seeing the *Tathāgata* is just this seeing of his physical body. Of course, we do not find in this discourse any prediction that we can see him after five-thousand years.

Whatever it may be, here we seem to have some deep idea underlying this discourse. An extremely important clue to a correct understanding of this *Dhamma*, one that helps to straighten up right view, lies beneath this problem of the Buddha's refusal to answer the tetralemma concerning the *Tathāgata*. This fact comes to light in the *Yamaka Sutta* of the *Khandhasaṃyutta*.

A monk named *Yamaka* conceived the evil view, the distorted view, *tathāhaṃ bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānāmi, yathā khīṇāsavo bhikkhu kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati, na hoti paraṃ maraṇā*. "As I understand the *Dhamma* taught by the Exalted One, an influx-free monk, with the breaking up of his body, is annihilated and perishes, he does not exist after death."

Translation Bodhi (2000: 931):

“As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, a bhikkhu whose taints are destroyed is annihilated and perishes with the breakup of the body and does not exist after death.”

SĀ 104

“As I understand the Dharma taught by the Buddha, an arahant, with the influxes being eradicated, will not exist anywhere after the body breaks up at the end of life.”

He went about saying that the Buddha had declared that the emancipated monk is annihilated at death. Other monks, on hearing this, tried their best to dispel his wrong view, saying that the Buddha had never declared so, but it was in vain. At last they approached Venerable *Sāriputta* and begged him to handle the situation.

Then Venerable *Sāriputta* came there, and after ascertaining the fact, proceeded to dispel Venerable *Yamaka's* wrong view by getting him to answer a series of questions. The first set of questions happened to be identical with the one the Buddha had put forward in Venerable *Anurādha's* case, namely a catechism on the three characteristics. We have already quoted it step by step, for facility of understanding. Suffice it to mention, in brief, that it served to convince Venerable *Yamaka* of the fact that whatever is impermanent, suffering and subject to change, is not fit to be looked upon as 'this is mine, this am I, and this is my self'.

The first step, therefore, consisted in emphasizing the not self characteristic through a catechism on the three signata. The next step was to get Venerable *Yamaka* to reflect on this not self characteristic in eleven ways, according to the standard formula.

Tasmātiha, āvuso Yamaka, yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ va sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā panītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ rūpaṃ n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'ham asmi, na me so attā'ti evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammāpaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Ya kāci vedanā ... ya kāci saññā ... ye keci saṅkhārā ... yaṃ kiñci viññānaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ va sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā panītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ viññānaṃ n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'ham asmi, na me so attā'ti evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammāpaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ.

Evaṃ passaṃ, āvuso Yamaka, sutavā ariyasāvako rūpasmiṃ nibbindati, vedanāya nibbindati, saññāya nibbindati, saṅkhāresu nibbindati, viññānaṃ vimuttasmiṃ vimuttam iti nāṇaṃ hoti. Khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti pajānāti.

"Therefore, friend *Yamaka*, any kind of form whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form must be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus: 'this is not mine, this

I am not, this is not my self'. Any kind of feeling whatsoever ... any kind of perception whatsoever ... any kind of preparations whatsoever ... any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all consciousness must be seen as it really is with right wisdom thus: 'this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'."

"Seeing thus, friend *Yamaka*, the instructed noble disciple gets disgusted of form, gets disgusted of feeling, gets disgusted of perception, gets disgusted of preparations, gets disgusted of consciousness. Being disgusted, he becomes dispassionate, through dispassion his mind is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge 'it is liberated' and he understands: 'extinct is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this state of being'."

As the third step in his interrogation of Venerable *Yamaka*, Venerable *Sāriputta* poses the same questions which the Buddha addressed to Venerable *Anurādhā*.

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard form as the *Tathāgata*?"
"No, friend." "Do you regard feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness as the *Tathāgata*?" "No, friend."

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in form?"
"No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from form?" "No, friend."
"Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in feeling?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from feeling?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in perception?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from perception?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in preparations?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from preparations?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in consciousness?" "No, friend." "Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as apart from consciousness?" "No, friend."

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness as constituting the *Tathāgata*?" "No, friend."
"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as one who is devoid of form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness?" "No, friend."

It was at this juncture that Venerable *Sāriputta* puts this conclusive question to Venerable *Yamaka* in order to drive the crucial point home.

"But then, friend *Yamaka*, now that for you a *Tathāgata* is not to be found in truth and fact here in this very life, is it proper for you to declare: 'As I understand *Dhamma* taught by the Exalted One, an influx-free monk is annihilated and destroyed when the body breaks up and does not exist after death'?"

Translation Bodhi (2000: 932):

“What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard form as the Tathāgata?” –
“No, friend.” –

“Do you regard feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as the Tathāgata?” – “No, friend.” “

What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard the Tathāgata as in form?” –
“No, friend.” – “Do you regard the Tathāgata as apart from form?” – “No, friend.” –

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as in feeling? As apart from feeling? As in perception? As apart from perception? As in volitional formations? As apart from volitional formations? As in consciousness? As apart from consciousness?” – “No, friend.”

“What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness [taken together] as the Tathāgata?” –
“No, friend.”

“What do you think, friend Yamaka, do you regard the Tathāgata as one who is without form, without feeling, without perception, without volitional formations, without consciousness?” – “No, friend.”

“But, friend, when the Tathāgata is not apprehended by you as real and actual here in this very life, is it fitting for you to declare: ‘As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, a bhikkhu whose taints are destroyed is annihilated and perishes with the breakup of the body and does not exist after death’?”

SĀ 104

[Sāriputta] asked again: “How is it, Yamaka, is bodily form the Tathāgata?”

[Yamaka] replied: “No, venerable Sāriputta.”

[Sāriputta asked again]: “Is feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness the Tathāgata?”

[Yamaka] replied: “No, venerable Sāriputta.”

[Sāriputta] asked again: “How is it, Yamaka, is the Tathāgata distinct from bodily form? Is the Tathāgata distinct from feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness?”

[Yamaka] replied: “No, venerable Sāriputta.”

[Sāriputta] asked again: “Is the Tathāgata in bodily form? Is the Tathāgata in feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness?”

[Yamaka] replied: “No, venerable Sāriputta.”

[Sāriputta asked again]: “Is bodily form in the Tathāgata? Is feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness in the Tathāgata?”

[Yamaka] replied: “No, venerable Sāriputta.”

[Sāriputta] asked again: “Is the Tathāgata without bodily form ... feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness?”

[Yamaka] replied: “No, venerable Sāriputta.”

[Sāriputta said]: “In this way, Yamaka, the Tathāgata as existing truly here and now cannot be gotten at anywhere, cannot be designated anywhere. Why do you say: [As] I understand the Dharma taught by the Buddha, an arahant, with the influxes being eradicated, will not exist anywhere after the body breaks up at the end of life? Is that properly spoken?”

At last, Venerable *Yamaka* confesses "Formerly, friend *Sāriputta*, I did hold that evil view, ignorant as I was. But now that I have heard this *Dhamma* sermon of the Venerable *Sāriputta*, I have given up that evil view and have gained an understanding of the *Dhamma*."

As if to get a confirmation of Venerable *Yamaka's* present stance, Venerable *Sāriputta* continues: "If, friend *Yamaka*, they were to ask you the question: 'Friend *Yamaka*, as to that monk, the influx-free *arahant*, what happens to him with the breaking up of the body after death?' Being asked thus, what would you answer?"

"If they were to ask me that question, friend *Sāriputta*, I would answer in this way: Friends, form is impermanent, what is impermanent is suffering, what is suffering has ceased and passed away. Feeling ... perception ... preparations ... consciousness is impermanent, what is impermanent is suffering, what is suffering has ceased and passed away. Thus questioned, I would answer in such a way."

Translation Bodhi (2000: 932):

“If, friend Yamaka, they were to ask you: ‘Friend Yamaka, when a bhikkhu is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed, what happens to him with the breakup of the body, after death?’—being asked thus, what would you answer?”

“If they were to ask me this, friend, I would answer thus: ‘Friends, form is impermanent; what is impermanent is suffering; what is suffering has ceased and passed away. Feeling ... Perception ... Volitional formations ... Consciousness is impermanent; what is impermanent is suffering; what is suffering has ceased and passed away.’ Being asked thus, friend, I would answer in such a way.”

[Sāriputta] asked again: “Yamaka, if you are further asked: 'Monk, as you earlier declared an evil wrong view, knowing and seeing what has this now all been completely removed?' What would you answer?”

Yamaka replied: “Venerable Sāriputta, if someone comes and asks, I would answer in this way: 'The bodily form of an arahant, with the influxes being eradicated, is impermanent. What is impermanent, is *dukkha*. What is *dukkha* has become tranquil and become cool, it has forever disappeared. Feeling, perception ... formations ... consciousness is also like this.' [If] someone comes and asks, I would answer in this way.”

Be it noted that, in this conclusive answer, there is no mention whatsoever of a *Tathāgata*, a *satta*, or a *puggala*.

Now at this reply, Venerable *Sāriputta* expresses his approbation: "Good, good, friend *Yamaka*, well then, friend *Yamaka*, I will bring up a simile for you that you may grasp this meaning all the more clearly.

Suppose, friend *Yamaka*, there was a householder or a householder's son, prosperous, with much wealth and property, protected by a bodyguard. Then some man would come by who wished to ruin him, to harm him, to imperil him, to deprive him of life. And it would occur to that man: 'This householder or a householder's son is prosperous, with much wealth and property, he has his bodyguard, it is not easy to deprive him of his life by force. What if I were to get close to him and take his life?'

Then he would approach that householder or householder's son and say to him: 'Would you take me on as a servant, sir?' Then the householder or householder's son would take him on as a servant. The man would serve him, rising up before him, going to bed after him, being at his beck and call, pleasing in his conduct, endearing in his speech. The householder or householder's son would regard him as a friend, an intimate friend, and would place trust in him. But once the man has ascertained that the householder or householder's son has trust in him, he waits for an opportunity to find him alone and kills him with a sharp knife."

Now this is the simile. Based on this deep simile, Venerable *Sāriputta* puts the following questions to Venerable *Yamaka* to see whether he has grasped the moral behind it.

"What do you think, friend *Yamaka*, when that man approached that householder or householder's son and said to him 'would you take me on as a servant, sir?', wasn't he a murderer even then, though the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer'? And when the man was serving him, rising up before him and going to bed after him, being at his beck and call, pleasing in his conduct and endearing in his speech, wasn't he a murderer then too, though the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer'? And when the man, finding him alone, took his life with a sharp knife, wasn't he a murderer then too, though the other did not know him as

'my murderer'?" Venerable *Yamaka* answers "yes, friend", by way of assent to all these matter-of-fact questions.

Translation Bodhi (2000: 933):

“Suppose, friend Yamaka, there was a householder or a householder’s son, a rich man, with much wealth and property, protected by a bodyguard. Then some man would appear who wanted to ruin him, to harm him, to endanger him, to take his life. It would occur to that man: ‘This householder or householder’s son is a rich man, with much wealth and property, protected by a bodyguard. It won’t be easy to take his life by force. Let me get close to him and then take his life.’

“Then he would approach that householder or householder’s son and say to him: ‘I would serve you, sir.’ Then the householder or householder’s son would appoint him as a servant. The man would serve him, rising up before him, retiring after him, doing whatever he wants, agreeable in his conduct, endearing in his speech. The householder or householder’s son would consider him a friend, a bosom friend, and he would place trust in him. But when the man becomes aware that the householder or householder’s son has placed trust in him, then, finding him alone, he would take his life with a sharp knife.”

“What do you think, friend Yamaka, when that man had approached that householder or householder’s son and said to him: ‘I would serve you, sir,’ wasn’t he a murderer even then, though the other did not recognize him as ‘my murderer’? And when the man was serving him, rising up before him, retiring after him, doing whatever he wants, agreeable in his conduct, endearing in his speech, wasn’t he a murderer then too, though the other did not recognize him as ‘my murderer’? And when the man came upon him while he was alone and took his life with a sharp knife, wasn’t he a murderer then too, though the other did not recognize him as ‘my murderer’?”

SĀ 104

It is like the son of a householder; a son of a householder who is very rich and has much wealth. He seeks widely for a retinue that well protects his wealth.

“Then an evil person who is his enemy pretends to have come as a close friend in order to become his retainer. He often waits for an opportunity, going to sleep late and rising early, looking after him nearby when he rests. He is careful and respectful in his affairs, modest in his words, causing his master to think of him with delight, to perceive him as a friend, to perceive him as a son, with utmost trust and without doubt, without guarding himself. Later on, with a sharp knife in his hand, he cuts off [his master's] life.

“Monk Yamaka, what do you think? That evil enemy, acting as the householder's friend, was he not acting from the outset as an expedient with a

mind intent on harm, constantly waiting for an opportunity until bringing about [the householder's] end? Yet that householder was not able to realize it, until the moment he suffered harm.”

It was then, that Venerable *Sāriputta* comes out with the full significance of this simile, portraying the uninstructed worldling in the same light as that naively unsuspecting and ignorant householder or householder's son.

"So too, friend *Yamaka*, the uninstructed worldling, who has no regard for the noble ones, and is unskilled and undisciplined in their *Dhamma*, who has no regard for good men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their *Dhamma*, regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He regards feeling as self ... perception as self ... preparations as self ... consciousness as self ...

He does not understand, as it really is, impermanent form as 'impermanent form', impermanent feeling as 'impermanent feeling', impermanent perception as 'impermanent perception', impermanent preparations as 'impermanent preparations', impermanent consciousness as 'impermanent consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, painful form as 'painful form', painful feeling as 'painful feeling', painful perception as 'painful perception', painful preparations as 'painful preparations', painful consciousness as 'painful consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, selfless form as 'selfless form', selfless feeling as 'selfless feeling', selfless perception as 'selfless perception', selfless preparations as 'selfless preparations', selfless consciousness as 'selfless consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, prepared form as 'prepared form', prepared feeling as 'prepared feeling', prepared perception as 'prepared perception', prepared preparations as 'prepared preparations', prepared consciousness as 'prepared consciousness'.

He does not understand, as it really is, murderous form as 'murderous form', murderous feeling as 'murderous feeling', murderous perception as 'murderous perception', murderous preparations as 'murderous preparations', murderous consciousness as 'murderous consciousness'."

This, then, is what the attitude of the uninstructed worldling amounts to. Venerable *Sāriputta* now goes on to describe the consequences of such an attitude for the worldling.

So rūpaṃ upeti upādiyati adhiṭṭhāti attā me 'ti, vedanaṃ ... saññaṃ ... saṅkhāre ... viññānaṃ upeti upādiyati adhiṭṭhāti attā me 'ti. Tassime pañcupādānakkhandhā upetā upādiṇṇā dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya saṃvattanti.

"He becomes committed to form, grasps it and takes a stand upon it as 'my self'. He becomes committed to feeling ... to perception ... to preparations ... to consciousness, grasps it and takes a stand upon it as 'my self'. These five

aggregates of grasping, to which he becomes committed, and which he grasps, lead to his harm and suffering for a long time."

Then Venerable *Sāriputta* contrasts it with the standpoint of the instructed disciple.

"But, friend, the instructed noble disciple, who has regard for the noble ones, who is skilled and disciplined in their *Dhamma*, who has regard for good men and is skilled and disciplined in their *Dhamma*, does not regard form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He does not regard feeling as self ... perception as self ... preparations as self ... consciousness as self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

He understands, as it really is, impermanent form as 'impermanent form', impermanent feeling as 'impermanent feeling', impermanent perception as 'impermanent perception', impermanent preparations as 'impermanent preparations', impermanent consciousness as 'impermanent consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, painful form as 'painful form', painful feeling as 'painful feeling', painful perception as 'painful perception', painful preparations as 'painful preparations', painful consciousness as 'painful consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, selfless form as 'selfless form', selfless feeling as 'selfless feeling', selfless perception as 'selfless perception', selfless preparations as 'selfless preparations', selfless consciousness as 'selfless consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, prepared form as 'prepared form', prepared feeling as 'prepared feeling', prepared perception as 'prepared perception', prepared preparations as 'prepared preparations', prepared consciousness as 'prepared consciousness'.

He understands, as it really is, murderous form as 'murderous form', murderous feeling as 'murderous feeling', murderous perception as 'murderous perception', murderous preparations as 'murderous preparations', murderous consciousness as 'murderous consciousness'."

He does not become committed to form, does not grasp it, does not take a stand upon it as 'my self'. He does not become committed to feeling ... to perception ... to preparations ... to consciousness, does not grasp it, does not take a stand upon it as 'my self'. These five aggregates of grasping, to which he does not become committed, which he does not grasp, lead to his welfare and happiness for a long time."

What Venerable *Sāriputta* wanted to prove, was the fact that everyone of the five aggregates is a murderer, though the worldlings, ignorant of the true state of affairs, pride themselves on each of them, saying 'this is mine, this am I and this is my self'. As the grand finale of this instructive discourse comes the following wonderful declaration by Venerable *Yamaka*.

"Such things do happen, friend *Sāriputta*, to those venerable ones who have sympathetic and benevolent fellow monks in the holy life, like you, to admonish

and instruct, so much so that, on hearing this *Dhamma* sermon of the Venerable *Sāriputta*, my mind is liberated from the influxes by non-grasping."

SĀ 104

When the venerable *Sāriputta* spoke this teaching, the monk *Yamaka* by not clinging attained liberation from the influxes in his mind.

This might sound extremely strange in this age of scepticism regarding such intrinsic qualities of the *Dhamma* like *sandiṭṭhika*, "visible here and now", *akālika*, "timeless", and *ehi-passika*, "inviting to come and see". But all the same we have to grant the fact that this discourse, which begins with a Venerable *Yamaka* who is bigoted with such a virulent evil view, which even his fellow monks found it difficult to dispel, concludes, as we saw, with this grand finale of a Venerable *Yamaka* joyfully declaring his attainment of *arahant*-hood.

This episode bears testimony to the fact that the tetralemma concerning the *Tathāgata's* after-death state has beneath it an extremely valuable criterion, proper to this *Dhamma*. There are some who are even scared to discuss this topic, perhaps due to unbalanced faith - faith unwarranted by wisdom. The tetralemma, however, reveals on analysis a wealth of valuable *Dhamma* material that goes to purify one's right view. That is why the Venerable *Yamaka* ended up as an *arahant*.

So this discourse, also, is further proof of the fact that the Buddha's solution to the problem of the indeterminate points actually took the form of a disquisition on voidness. Such expositions fall into the category called *suññatapaṭisaṃyuttā suttantā*, "discourses dealing with voidness". This category of discourses avoids the conventional worldly usages, such as *satta*, "being", and *puggala*, "person", and highlights the teachings on the four noble truths, which bring out the nature of things 'as they are'.

Generally, such discourses instil fear into the minds of worldlings, so much so that even during the Buddha's time there were those recorded instances of misconstruing and misinterpretation. It is in this light that we have to appreciate the Buddha's prediction that in the future there will be monks who would not like to listen or lend ear to those deep and profound discourses of the Buddha, pertaining to the supramundane and dealing with the void.

Puna ca param, bhikkhave, bhavissanti bhikkhū anāgatamaddhānaṃ abhāvitakāya abhāvitasīlā abhāvitacittā abhāvitapaññā, te abhāvitakāyā samānā abhāvitasīlā abhāvitacittā abhāvitapaññā ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatapaṭisaṃyuttā, tesu bhaññamānesu na sussūsanti, na sotaṃ odahissanti, na aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhapessanti, na ca te dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññissanti.

"And moreover, monks, there will be in the future those monks who, being undeveloped in bodily conduct, being undeveloped in morality, being

undeveloped in concentration, being undeveloped in wisdom, would not like to listen, to lend ear or to make an attempt to understand and deem it fit to learn when those discourses preached by the *Tathāgata*, which are deep, profound in meaning, supramundane and dealing with the void, are being recited."

Translation Bodhi (2012: 714):

“Again, in the future there will be bhikkhus who are undeveloped in body, virtuous behavior, mind, and wisdom. When those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata are being recited that are deep, deep in meaning, world-transcending, connected with emptiness, they will not want to listen to them, will not lend an ear to them, or apply their minds to understand them; they will not think those teachings should be studied and learned.”

This brings us to an extremely deep dimension of this *Dhamma*. By way of clarification, we may allude to a kind of exorcism practiced by some traditional devil dancers. At the end of an all-night session of devil dancing, the mediating priest goes round, exorcising the spirits from the house with fistfuls of a highly inflammable incense powder. Blazing flames arise, as he sprinkles that powder onto the lighted torch, directing the flames at every nook and corner of the house. Some onlookers even get scared that he is trying to set the house on fire. But actually no harm is done.

Well, the Buddha, too, as the mediating priest of the three realms, had to conduct a similar exorcising ritual over linguistic conventions, aiming at some words in particular. It is true that he made use of conventional language in order to convey his teaching. But his *Dhamma* proper was one that transcended logic, *atakkāvacarō*.

It happened to be a *Dhamma* that soared well above the limitations of grammar and logic, and analytically exposed their very structure. The marvel of the *Dhamma* is in its very inaccessibility to logic. That is why it defied the four-cornered logic of the tetralemma. It refused to be cornered and went beyond the concepts of a 'being' or a 'self'. The *saṃsāric* vortex was breached and concepts themselves were transcended.

Now this is the exorcism the Buddha had to carry out. He smoked out the term *attā*, "self", so dear to the whole world. Of course, he could not help making use of that word as such. In fact there is an entire chapter in the *Dhammapada* entitled *Attavagga*. But it must be emphasized that the term in that context does not refer to a permanent self. It stands for 'oneself'. Some who mistakenly rendered it as 'self', ended up in difficulties. Take for instance the following verse.

*Attā hi attano nātho,
ko hi nātho paro siyā,
attanā hi sudantena,
nāthaṃ labhati dullabhaṃ.*

"Oneself, indeed, is one's own saviour,
What other saviour could there be?
Even in oneself, disciplined well,
One finds that saviour, so hard to find."

Translation Norman (2004: 24):

"The self is indeed the lord of self; Who else indeed could be the lord? By the self indeed, when well tamed, one obtains a lord who is hard to obtain."

Those who render the above verse literally, with a self-bias, would get stuck when confronted with the following verse in the *Bālavagga*, the "chapter of the fool".

Puttā m'atthi, dhanam m'atthi,
iti bālo vihaññati,
attā hi attano n'atthi,
kuto puttā, kuto dhanam?
"Sons I have, wealth I have',
So the fool is vexed,
Even oneself is not one's own,
Where then are sons, where is wealth?"

Translation Norman (2004: 10):

"[Thinking] 'I have sons', 'I have wealth', the fool is tormented. He has indeed no self of his own, how much less sons? How much less wealth?"

Whereas the former verse says *attā hi attano nātho*, here we find the statement *attā hi attano n'atthi*. If one ignores the reflexive sense and translates the former line with something like "self is the lord of self", one will be at a loss to translate the seemingly contradictory statement "even self is not owned by self".

At times, the Buddha had to be incisive in regard to some words, which the worldlings are prone to misunderstand and misinterpret. We have already discussed at length the significance of such terms as *satta* and *tathāgata*, with reference to their etymological background. *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, or "personality view", masquerades even behind the term *tathāgata*, and that is why they raise such ill-founded questions. That is also why one is averse to penetrate into the meanings of these deep discourses.

Like the term *tathāgata*, the term *loka* also had insinuations of a self-bias. The Buddha, as we saw, performed the same ritual of exorcism to smoke out those insinuations. His definition of the 'world' with reference to the six sense-bases is a corrective to that erroneous concept.

Among the indeterminate points, too, we find questions relating to the nature of the world, such as *sassato loko - asassato loko*, "the world is eternal - the world is not eternal", and *antavā loko - anantavā loko*, "the world is finite - the world is infinite". In all such contexts, the questioner had the prejudice of the conventional concept of the world. The commentaries refer to it as *cakkavāḷaloka*, the common concept of "world system". But the Buddha advanced a profound definition of the concept of the world with reference to the six bases of sense-contact.

In this connection, we come across a highly significant discourse in the *Salāyatanavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. There we find the Buddha making the following declaration to the monks.

Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñātayyaṃ, daṭṭhayaṃ, patteyyan'ti vadāmi. Na ca panāhaṃ, bhikkhave, appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ vadāmi.

"Monks, I do not say that by travelling one can come to know or see or reach the end of the world. Nor do I say that without reaching the end of the world one can put an end to suffering."

Translation Bodhi (2000: 1188):

"Bhikkhus, I say that the end of the world cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling. Yet, bhikkhus, I also say that without reaching the end of the world there is no making an end to suffering."

SĀ 234

"I do not say that a person reaches the end of the world by walking, and I also do not say that without walking [the path] one reaches the end of the world and the unsurpassed transcendence of *dukkha*."

After this riddle-like pronouncement, the Buddha gets up and retires to the monastery. We came across this kind of problematic situation earlier too. Most probably this is a device of the Buddha as the teacher to give his disciples an opportunity to train in the art of analytical exposition of the *Dhamma*. After the Buddha had left, those monks, perplexed by this terse and tantalizing declaration, approached Venerable *Ānanda* and begged him to expound its meaning at length. With some modest hesitation, as usual, Venerable *Ānanda* agreed and came out with the way he himself understood the significance of the Buddha's declaration in the following words.

Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko. Kena c'āvuso lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī?

Cakkhunā kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, sotena ... ghānena ... jivhāya ... kāyena ... manena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī. Yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko.

"Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the noble ones is called 'the world'. By what, friends, has one a perception of the world and a conceit of the world?"

By the eye, friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, by the ear ... by the nose ... by the tongue ... by the body ... by the mind, friends one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world. That, friends, by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the noble ones is called 'the world'."

Translation Bodhi (2000: 1190):

"That in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world—this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline. And what, friends, is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world? The eye is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. The ear ... The nose ... The tongue ... The body ... The mind is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. That in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world—this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline."

SĀ 234

"Whatever there is of a 'world', of naming a 'world', of experiencing a 'world', of designating a 'world', of a linguistic expression of a 'world', it all enters into being reckoned as a 'world' Venerable friends, that is, the eye is a 'world', a naming of a 'world', an experiencing of a 'world', a designation of a 'world', a linguistic expression of a 'world', it all enters into being reckoned a 'world'.

"The ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind is also like that.

"A learned noble disciple understands as it really is the arising of the six sense-spheres, their cessation, their gratification, their danger, and the escape from them. This is called a noble disciple who reaches the end of the world, who understands the world and who, having been burdened by the world, has transcended the world."

(Next Ānanda also offers a verse summary)

It seems, then, that the definition of the world in the discipline of the noble ones is one that accords with radical attention, *yoniso manasikāra*, whereas the concept of the world as upheld in those indeterminate points is born of wrong attention, *ayoniso manasikāra*.

In the present age, too, scientists, when they speak of an 'end of the world', entertain presumptions based on wrong attention.

When those monks who listened to Venerable *Ānanda's* exposition reported it to the Buddha, he fully endorsed it. This definition, therefore, is as authentic as the word of the Buddha himself and conclusive enough. It is on the basis of the

six sense-bases that the world has a perception of the 'world' and a conceit of the 'world'.

The conceit here meant is not pride as such, but the measuring characteristic of worldly concepts. For instance, there is this basic scale of measuring length: The inch, the span, the foot, the cubit and the fathom. These measurements presuppose this body to be a measuring rod. In fact, all scales of measurement, in some way or other, relate to one or the other of the six sense-bases. That is why the above definition of the world is on the side of radical attention.

The worldling's concept of the world, conventionally so called, is the product of wrong or non-radical attention. It is unreal to the extent that it is founded on the notion of the compact, *ghanasaññā*. The existence of the world, as a whole, follows the norm of arising and ceasing. It is by ignoring this norm that the notion of the compact receives acceptance.

Two persons are watching a magic kettle on display at a science exhibition. Water is endlessly flowing from the magic kettle to a basin. One is waiting until the kettle gets empty, while the other waits to see the basin overflowing. Neither of their wishes is fulfilled. Why? Because a hidden tube conducts the water in the basin back again to the kettle. So the magic kettle never gets emptied and the basin never overflows. This is the secret of the magic kettle.

The world also is such a magic kettle. Gigantic world systems contract and expand in cyclic fashion. In the ancient term for world systems, *cakkavāḷa*, this cyclic nature is already insinuated. Taken in a broader sense, the existence or continuity of the world is cyclic, as indicated by the two terms *saṃvaṭṭa* and *vivaṭṭa*, "contraction" and "expansion". In both these terms, the significant word *vaṭṭa*, suggestive of "turning round", is seen to occur. It is as good as saying "rise and fall", *udayabbaya*.

When one world system gets destroyed, another world system gets crystallized, as it were. We hear of *Brahmā* mansions emerging. So the existence of the world is a continuous process of arising and ceasing. It is in a cycle. How can one find a point of beginning in a cycle? Can one speak of it as 'eternal' or 'non-eternal'? The question as a whole is fallacious.

On the other hand the Buddha's definition of the term *loka*, based on the etymology *lujjati, palujjati'ti loko*, is quite apt and meaningful. The world is all the time in a process of disintegration. It is by ignoring this disintegrating nature and by overemphasizing the arising aspect that the ordinary uninstructed worldling speaks of a 'world' as it is conventionally understood. The world is afflicted by this process of arising and passing away in every moment of its existence.

It is to be found in our breathing, too. Our entire body vibrates to the rhythm of this rise and fall. That is why the Buddha offered us a redefinition of the world. According to the terminology of the noble ones, the world is to be redefined with reference to the six bases of sense-contact. This includes mind and mind-objects as well. In fact, the range of the six bases of sense-contact is all comprehending. Nothing falls outside of it.