"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. With the permission of the Most Venerable Great Preceptor and the assembly of the venerable meditative monks. This is the sixteenth sermon in the series of sermons on Nibbāna.

In the course of our discussion of the Bāhiyasutta in our last sermon, we drew attention to the wide gap that exists between the sensory experience of the worldling and that experience the arahant gets through the eye of wisdom. It is the same gap that obtains between the two terms papañca and nippapañca. In sensory experience, which is based on worldly expressions, worldly usages and worldly concepts, there is a discrimination between a thing to be grasped and the one who grasps, or, in other words, a subject-object relationship.

There is always a bifurcation, a dichotomy, in the case of sensory perception. If there is a seen, there has to be something seen and the one who sees. That is the logic. In the Bāhiyasutta, beginning with 'in the seen there will be just the seen', the Buddha proclaimed to the ascetic Bāhya a brief exhortation on Dhamma which enables one to transcend the above narrow viewpoint and attain the state of non-proliferation or nippapañca.

There is nothing to see, no one to see, only 'a seen' is there. The cause of all these conceptual proliferation, or papañca, in the world is contact. The arahants understood this by their insight into the fact that the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized are simply so many collocations of conditions which come together for a moment due to contact, only to break up and get dispersed the next moment.
What is called the seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized are for the worldling so many 'things'. But to the wisdom eye of the arahants they appear as mere conglomerations of conditions, dependent on contact, which momentarily come together and then get dispersed. This insight into the dependence on contact, phassam paṭicca, is the very essence of the law of dependent arising, paṭicca samuppāda. It is equivalent to seeing the law of dependent arising itself.

In order to transcend the narrow point of view limited to the bases of sense contact or the six sense spheres and realize the state of Nibbāna indicated by the words viññānam anidassanam, anantam sabbato pabham, "consciousness which is non-manifestative, endless, lustrous on all sides", one has to see the cessation of contact.

In a certain discourse in the Mucalindavagga of the Udāna, the Buddha has declared in a verse of uplift that the cessation of contact comes about only by doing away with that which brings about contact. The wandering ascetics of other sects grew jealous of the Buddha and his congregation of monks, because of their own loss of gain and honour, and began to hurl abuse on monks in the village and in the forest. A group of monks came and reported this to the Buddha. The Buddha's response to it was only a paean of joy. Udāna actually means a spontaneous utterance of joy, and the verse he uttered was such a one. But it embodied an instruction on Dhamma and a norm of Dhamma as well.

Gāme araññe sukhadukkhaphuṭṭho,
nev'attato no parato dahetha,
phusanti phassā upadhiṃ paṭicca,
Nirūpadhiṃ kena phuseyyum phassā.

In the first two lines we get an instruction:
"Touched by pain in village or in forest,
Think not in terms of oneself or others"
The reason for it is given in the norm of Dhamma which follows:
"Touches can touch one, because of assets,
How can touches touch him, who is asset-less?"

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Translation Ireland (1990: 25):

“When affected by pleasure and pain in the village and forest
One should not ascribe them to oneself or another.
Contacts affect one dependent on clinging,
How can contacts affect one without clinging?”

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This is all what the Buddha uttered. From this we can glean another aspect of the significance of the terms sabbūpadhipaṭinissagga, relinquishment of all assets, and nirupadhi, the asset-less, used with reference to Nibbāna.

In a number of previous sermons we happened to explain the concept of upadhi to some extent, as and when the terms upadhi and paṭinissagga came up.
To refresh our memory, we may summarize all that now. What is the concept of *upadhi*, or "assets", recognized by the world?

Whatever that bolsters up the ego, be it gold, silver, pearls, gems, money, house and property, deposits and assets. All these are reckoned as *upadhi* in general. But when considered from the point of view of *Dhamma*, *upadhi* in a deeper sense stands for this fivefold grasping groups, *pañcupādānakkhanda*.

*Upādānakkhanda* literally means "groups of grasping". Groups of grasping do not necessarily imply that there are material objects to be grasped. But the worldling, overcome by that triple proliferation of cravings, conceits and views, and carried away by the worldly conventions, imagines those groups of grasping as things grasped and deposited. The concept of *upadhi* as assets has arisen as a result of this tendency to think of groups of grasping as things grasped and deposited. So it turns out to be a question of viewpoint.

Cravings, conceits and views prompt one to look upon all what one has grasped so far and what one hopes to grasp in the future as things one is grasping right now. One thinks of them as things deposited in a safe. The worldlings are holding on to such a mass of assets.

**Nibbāna** is the relinquishment of all such assets, accumulated in the mind. In order to relinquish these assets there must be some kind of understanding - an enlightenment. The vanity of all these assets has to be seen through by the light of wisdom. It is only by seeing their vanity that the assets are relinquished. In fact it is not so much a deliberate giving up of assets, as a sequential liquidation.

In a previous sermon we gave an illustration of the situation that precipitates relinquishment. Let us bring it up again. We found the cinema quite helpful as an illustration. In explaining the phenomenon of relinquishment of assets with reference to the cinema, we described how the assets accumulated in the minds of the audience, that is, the assets proper to the cinema world woven around the story that is filmed, are automatically abandoned when the cinema hall gets lit up. Then one understands the illusory nature of what has been going on. It is that understanding, that enlightenment, which precipitates the giving up or relinquishment of assets.

To go a step further in this illustration, when lights came on the *saṅkhāras* or preparations pertaining to the film show got exposed for what they are. In fact, *saṅkhāra* is a word that has associations with the dramatic tradition in its relation to the acting of actors and actresses down to their make-up, which is so artificial and spurious.

When the cinema hall gets lit up all of a sudden, one who has been enjoying the film show is momentarily thrown out of the cinema world, because those preparations are pacified or nullified, *sabbha saṅkhārasamatho*. As a consequence of it, the heap of experiences which he had hitherto regarded as real and genuine, lose their sanction. Those assets get liquidated or relinquished, *sabbupadhipatinnissagga*. In their absence, that craving necessary for the appreciation or enjoyment of the scenes to come becomes extinct, *tanhakkhayo*. When craving is gone, the floridity of the scenes to come also fades away,
virāga. With that fading away or decolouration, the film show ceases for the person concerned, nirodha, though technically the movie is going on. Because of that cessation all the fires of defilements proper to the cinema world, with which he was burning, get extinguished, Nibbāna.

So here we have the full gamut of the cinema simile as an illustration for Nibbāna. This kind of awakening in the cinema world gives us a clue to the fact that the assets, upadhi, are relinquished through an understanding born of enlightenment in the light of wisdom. This in fact is something that should be deeply ingrained in our minds. Therefore we shall endeavour to give some more illustrations to that effect.

In our everyday life, too, we sometimes see and hear of instances where assets get relinquished due to understanding. Someone heaps up a huge bundle of currency notes of the highest denomination, deposits it in his safe and keeps watch and ward over it day and night. One fine morning he wakes up to hear that for some reason or other that currency note has been fully devalued by law the previous night. How does he look upon the wads of notes in his safe now? For him, it is now a mere heap of papers. The craving, conceit and view he had earlier in regard to the notes are completely gone. The bank notes are no longer valid. He might as well make a bonfire of it. So this is some sort of relinquishment of assets in the world, however temporary it may be.

Another person gets a sudden transfer and is getting ready to leave for his new station. His immovable assets he is forced to leave behind, but his movable assets he hurriedly gathers up to take with him. The vehicle has already come and is tooting impatiently, signalling delay. It is well past time, but his 'preparations' are not finished. Time-pressed, in hot haste, he is running here and there. At last, when he can delay no longer, he grabs the utmost he can take and darts to the doorstep. Just then, he wakes up. It was only a dream! The transfer came in a dream. No real vehicle, no real preparation, only a panting for nothing!

So here we have an 'awakening' peculiar to the dream world. This is an instance of letting go of assets connected with a dream. We go through such experiences quite often. Of course, we take it for granted that when we pass from the dream world to the real world, the assets proper to the dream world drop off. But are we sure that in leaving the dream world we are entering a real world? Is awakening from a dream a true awakening when considered from the point of view of the Dhamma? Do we actually open our eyes, when we awaken from a dream?

Terms like Buddha, bodhi and sambodhi convey the sense of awakening as well as understanding. Sometimes in the Dhamma the emphasis is on the sense of awakening. Here then is a kind of awakening.

Expressions like dhammacakkhu, "Dhamma-eye", paññācakkhu, "Wisdom-eye", and cakkhu udapādi, "the eye arose", bespeak of an arising of some sort of an eye. We already have eyes, but an eye is said to arise. All this goes to show that in the context of Nibbāna, where we are concerned with the deeper
aspects of the Dhamma, the awakening from a dream is not a true awakening. It is only a passage from one dream world to another.

But let us see how the concept of upadhi, or assets, goes deeper. What lies before us is the dream of samsāra. In order to awaken from this dream, we have to understand somehow the vanity of all assets connected with the dream that is samsāra. The fact that this understanding also comes through some illumination we have already explained the other day in our discussion of the paean of joy at the end of the Bāhiyasutta. As we pointed out then, the world of the six sense-bases which the worldlings regard as 'their world', when examined against the background of that Udāna verse reveals itself to be no more than six narrow beams of light, appearing through a solidly thick curtain, namely the darkness of delusion.

We happened to mention the other day that the sun, the moon and the stars shine precisely because of the presence of darkness. In the non-manifestative consciousness which is infinite and lustrous all round, viññāṇam anidassanam, anantam sabbato pabhāṃ, sun, moon and stars are not manifest, because there is absolutely no darkness for them to shine forth. Even the formless, which is the penumbra of form, disappears in that penetrative lustre of wisdom.

So the relinquishment of all assets, Nibbāna, is not like the other temporary awakenings already mentioned. Those three instances of awakening are of a temporary nature. The awakening in the cinema world is extremely short lived. That film fan, although he became disenchanted with the scenes because of the unexpected sudden illumination of the cinema hall, when it is dark again, influxes of sensuality, existence and ignorance so overwhelm him that he gets engrossed in the cinema world as before.

The case of the devalued currency note is also like that. Though the cravings, conceits and views about the devalued note are gone, one still runs after notes that are valid. As for the awakening from a dream, we all know that it is temporary. When again we go to sleep, we have dreams.

But the awakening in Nibbāna is not of such a temporary character. Why? Because all the influxes that lead one into the samsāric slumber with its dreams of recurrent births are made extinct in the light of that perfect knowledge of realization. That is why the term āsavakkhaya, extinction of influxes, is used in the discourses as an epithet of Nibbāna. The arahants accomplish this feat in the concentration on the fruit of arahant-hood, arahattaphalasamādhi.

Though there are enough instances of references to this arahattaphalasamādhi in the discourses, they are very often interpreted differently. As we have already seen in the context of that verse of uplift in the Bāhiyasutta, some discourses alluding to the nature of an arahant's mind have been misinterpreted, so much so that there is a lot of confusion in regard to the concept of Nibbāna. As a matter of fact, that concentration peculiar to an arahant is of an extraordinary type. It baffles the worldling's powers of understanding. This can well be inferred from the following verse of the Ratanasutta:
Yaṃ Buddhaseṭṭho parivaṭṭhayā sucīṃ, 
samādhim ānantarikaññam āhu, 
samādhinā tena samo na vijjati, 
idampi Dhamme ratanaṃ paññām, 
etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

"That pure concentration, which the Supremely Awakened One extolled, 
That concentration which the Noble Ones call 'immediate' 
(ānantarika), 
There is no concentration comparable to it, 
This is the excellent jewel nature of the Dhamma, 
By the power of this truth may there be well-being."

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Translation Bodhi (2017: 193):

“The purity that the supreme Buddha praised, 
which they call concentration without interval 
the equal of that concentration does not exist. 
This too is the sublime gem in the Dhamma: 
by this truth, may there be safety!”

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This incomparable and extraordinary concentration has given rise to many 
problems concerning the concept of Nibbāna. The extraordinariness of this 
collection of the arahant is to some extent connected with the term 
ānantarika, referred to above. Now let us turn our attention to the significance 
of this term.

The verse says that the concentration of the arahant is also known as 
ānantarika. The term ānantarika is suggestive of an extraordinary aspect of the 
realization of Nibbāna. Immediately after the extinction of the defilements 
through the knowledge of the path of arahant-hood one realizes Nibbāna, the 
cessation of existence or the cessation of the six sense-bases. As we mentioned 
earlier, it is as if the results are out as soon as one has written for an 
examination. One need not wait for the results. Realization is immediate.

There is a special term to denote this experience of realization, namely, aññā. 
It is a highly significant term, derived from ājānāti, "to know fully". Aññā is 
"full comprehension".

The concentration of the fruit of arahant-hood is also called 
aññāphalasamādhi and aññāvimokkha. Aññā carries with it a high degree of 
importance. We come across in the Sutta terminology a number of terms derived 
from the root ājā, "to know", namely saññā, viññāṇa, paññā, ānā, abhiññā, 
pariññā, aññā. Saññā is "perception", viññāṇa is, radically, "discriminative 
knowledge", paññā is "distinctive knowledge", ānā is "knowledge" as such, 
abhiññā is "specialized knowledge", pariññā is "comprehensive knowledge", 
aññā is that "final knowledge" of certitude through realization. The high degree
of importance attached to aññā is revealed by the following two verses in the Itivuttaka:

Sekhassa sikkhamānassa
ujumaggānusārino
dhyanāṇim paṭhamaṃ aññatā
Tato aññā anantarā.  

And to that steadfast such-like-one,
Thus released by final knowledge of certitude,
There arises the thought: 'Unshakeable is my deliverance',
Upon the destruction of fetters of existence."

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Translation Ireland (1991: 43):

"'For a learner who is training
In conformity with the direct path,
The knowledge of destruction arises first,
And final knowledge immediately follows.'

"Freed by that final knowledge,
By destroying the fetters of being
The serene one has the certainty:
'Unshakeable is my release.'"

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It is evident from these two verses that the realization referred to is in many ways final and complete. In point of fact, these two verses have been presented by the Buddha in this context by way of defining three things relevant to the realization of Nibbāna. These three are called faculties, indriya. They are:

1) anaññātaññāssāṃīt'indriya
2) aññindriya
3) aññātāvindriya

The term aññā is implicit even in the faculty called anaññātaññāssāṃīt'indriya. Anaññātaññāssāmi means "I shall know what has not been fully known". This is the definition of what in the verse is referred to as khayasmiṃ paṭhamaṃ aññatā, "first there is the knowledge of extinction". The knowledge of the extinction of the defilements is called anaññātaññāssāṃīt'indriya in this context. The words tato aññā anantarā, "and then immediately the final knowledge of certitude", refer to that faculty of final
knowledge, or aññindriya. The knowledge that prompts the conviction "unshakeable is my deliverance" is the knowledge and vision of deliverance, which is defined as aññātāvindriya. It refers to one who is endowed with the final knowledge of certitude.

The difference between aññindriya and aññātāvindriya is a subtle one. For instance, the expression bhutāvī pavārīto, one has finished eating and made a sign of refusal, decisively shows that one has had one's fill. Similarly, it is that aññātāvindriya (note the past active participle), which prompts the words "unshakeable is my deliverance", akuppā me vimutti. The knowledge and vision of deliverance is reassuring to that extent.

As the above quoted verse from the Ratanasutta makes it clear, this unique and extraordinary concentration has been extolled by the Buddha in various discourses. But for some reason or other, the commentators have simply glossed over references to it, though they sometimes expatiate on a particle of mere grammatical interest. Let us now take up for comment a few such discourses.

In the section of the Elevens in the Ānguttara Nikāya there comes a discourse called Sandhasutta. There the Buddha gives to Venerable Sandha a description of a level of concentration characteristic of an excellent thoroughbred of a man. It is a strange type of concentration. One who has that concentration is described as follows:

So neva paṭhavim nissāya jhāyati, na āpaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na tejaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na vāyaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na ākāsānañcāyatanam nissāya jhāyati, na viññāñcāyatanam nissāya jhāyati, na akiñcaññāyatanam nissāya jhāyati, na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanam nissāya jhāyati, na idhalokam nissāya jhāyati, na paralokam nissāya jhāyati, yam p'idaṃ diṭṭham sutam mutam viññātaṃ pattam pariyesitam anuvicaritaṃ manasā, tam pi nissāya na jhāyati, jhāyati ca pana. 

Evaṃ jhāyim ca pana, Sandha, bhadram purisājanīyaṃ sa-īndā devā sabrahmakā sapajapatikā ārakā 'va namassanti:
Namo te purisājaṇa, 
namo te purisuttama, 
yassa te nābhijānāma, 
yampi nissāya jhāyasi. 

In this discourse, the Buddha gives, as an illustration, the musing of a thoroughbred of a horse, which we shall drop for brevity's sake. The musing of an excellent thoroughbred of a man is described as follows:

"He muses not dependent on earth, water, fire, air, the sphere of infinite space, the sphere of infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he muses not dependent on this world or on the world beyond, whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, traversed by the mind, dependent on all that he muses not - and yet he does muse.

Moreover, Sandha, to him thus musing the devas with Indra, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati even from afar bow down, saying:

'Homage to you, O thoroughbred of a man,
Homage to you, O most excellent of men,
For what it is on which you go on musing,
We are at a loss to comprehend."

Translation Bodhi (2012: 1561):
“He does not meditate in dependence on earth, in dependence on water, in dependence on fire, in dependence on air, in dependence on the base of the infinity of space, in dependence on the base of the infinity of consciousness, in dependence on the base of nothingness, in dependence on the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, in dependence on this world, in dependence on the other world, in dependence on what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, sought after, or examined by the mind, and yet he meditates.
“When he meditates in such a way, the devas along with Indra, Brahmā, and Pajāpati worship the excellent thoroughbred person from afar, saying:
“‘Homage to you, O thoroughbred person!
Homage to you, O supreme person!
We ourselves do not understand
What you meditate in dependence on.’”

SĀ 926
「比丘如是禪者,不依地修禪,不依水、火、風、空、識、無所有、非想非非想而修禪。不依此世、不依他世,非日、月,非見、聞、覺、識,非得非求,非隨覺,非隨觀而修禪。

「詵陀！比丘如是修禪者，諸天主、伊濕波羅、波闍波提恭敬合掌，稽首作禮而說偈言：

南無大士夫，
南無士之上，
以我不能知，
依何而禪定？

(CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 236, a11-19)

Though all possible objects of concentration are negated, the Buddha affirms that he does muse. Venerable Sandha, out of curiosity inquires: "But then how, Lord, does that thoroughbred of a man muse?" The Buddha explains that while in that state of concentration, the perception of earth in earth, for instance, is gone for him, pathaviyā pathavīsaññā vibhūtā hoti. So also in the case of other objects of the senses, such as water, fire, air, down to whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after and traversed by the mind.
The verb vibhūta, repeatedly used in this connection, is however differently interpreted in the commentary. It is paraphrased by pākaṭā, which means "clearly manifest". This interpretation seems to distort the meaning of the entire passage.

It is true that in certain contexts vibhūta and avibhūta are taken to mean "manifest" and "unmanifest", since vibhava is a word which seems to have undergone some semantic development. However, its primary sense is sufficiently evident in the Sutta terminology. For instance, the twin term bhava/vibhava stands for "existence" and "non-existence". In this context, too, vibhūta seems to have a negative sense, rather than the sense of being manifest. Hence our rendering: "The perception of earth is gone for him".

It is obvious enough by the recurrent negative particle in the first part of the Sutta (neva paṭhavim nissāya jhāyati, na āpaṃ nissāya jhāyati, etc.) that all those perceptions are negated and not affirmed as manifest. The commentator seems to have missed the true import of the Sutta when he interprets vibhūta to mean 'manifest'.

If further proof is required, we may quote instances where the word vibhūta is used in the Suttas to convey such senses as "gone", "departed" or "transcended". In one of the verses we happened to quote earlier from the Kalahavivādasutta, there was the question posed: Kismiṃ vibhūte na phusanti phassā? "When what is not there, do touches not touch?" The verse that follows gives the answer: Rūpe vibhūte na phusanti phassā. "When form is not there, touches do not touch." In this context, too, vibhūta implies absence.

A clearer instance comes in the Posālamāṇavaavucchā of the Pārāyanavagga in the Sutta Nipāta, namely the term vibhūtarūpasanānissa, occurring in one of the verses there. The canonical commentary Čūḷaniddesa, which the commentator often draws upon, also paraphrases the term with the words vigatā, atikkantā, samatikkantā, vītivattā, "gone, transcended, fully transcended, and superseded".

So the word vibhūta in the passage in question definitely implies the absence of all those perceptions in that concentration. This, then, is a unique concentration. It has none of the objects which the worldlings usually associate with a level of concentration.

We come across a number of instances in the discourses, in which the Buddha and some other monks have been interrogated on the nature of this extraordinary concentration. Sometimes even Venerable Ānanda is seen to confront the Buddha with a question on this point. In a discourse included in the section of the Elevens in the Āṅguttara Nikāya, Venerable Ānanda questions on the possibility of attaining to such a concentration with an air of wonderment:

Siyā nu kho, bhante, bhikkhuno tathārūpo samādhipaṭilābhā yathā neva pathaviyaṃ pathavi(cpasaññā assa, na āpasmiṃ āposaññā assa, na tejasmiṃ teja(pasaññā assa, na vāyasmiṃ vāyosaññā assa, na ākāsānacāyatanagāsasasanānassā assa, na viññānacāyatanagāsasasanānassā assa, na ākiñcaññāyatanagāsasasanānassā assa, na
nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasaññī assa, na idhaloke idhalokasaññī assa, na paraloke paralokasaññī assa, yam p’idaṃ diṭṭham sutaṃ mutaṃ viññātamaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā tatrāpi na saññī assa, saññī ca pana assa?

"Could there be, Lord, for a monk such an attainment of concentration wherein he will not be conscious (literally 'percipient') of earth in earth, nor of water in water, nor of fire in fire, nor of air in air, nor will he be conscious of the sphere of infinite space in the sphere of infinite space, nor of the sphere of infinite consciousness in the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor of the sphere of nothingness in the sphere of nothingness, nor of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, nor will he be conscious of a this world in this world, nor of a world beyond in a world beyond, whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, traversed by the mind, even of it he will not be conscious - and yet he will be conscious?"

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Translation Bodhi (2012: 1557f):

"Bhante, could a bhikkhu obtain such a state of concentration that he would not be percipient of earth in relation to earth; of water in relation to water; of fire in relation to fire; of air in relation to air; of the base of the infinity of space in relation to the base of the infinity of space; of the base of the infinity of consciousness in relation to the base of the infinity of consciousness; of the base of nothingness in relation to the base of nothingness; of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception in relation to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; of this world in relation to this world; of the other world in relation to the other world; of anything seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, sought after, and examined by the mind, but he would still be percipient?"

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Whereas the passage quoted earlier began with so neva pathavim nissāya jhāyati, "he muses not dependent on earth" and ended with the emphatic assertion jhāyati ca pana, "and yet he does muse", here we have a restatement of it in terms of perception, beginning with neva pathavīyaṃ pathavīsaññī and ending with saññī ca pana assa. The Buddha answers in the affirmative and on being questioned as to how it is possible he gives the following explanation:

_Idhi Ānanda, bhikkhu, evaṃ saññī hoti: Etaṃ sāntaṃ, etaṃ pañītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṅhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānan’ti. Evaṃ kho, Ānanda, siyā bhikkhuno tathārūpo samādhīpaṭilābho ..._

"Herein, Ānanda, a monk is thus conscious (evaṃ saññī): This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction. It is thus, Ānanda, that there could be for a monk such an attainment of concentration ..."
“Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu is percipient thus: ‘This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all activities, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna.’ It is in this way, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu could obtain such a state of concentration …”

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This, in fact, is the theme of all our sermons. Venerable Ānanda, of course, rejoiced in the Buddha's words, but approached Venerable Sāriputta also and put forward the same question. Venerable Sāriputta gave the same answer verbatim.

Then Venerable Ānanda gave expression to a joyous approbation: Acchariyāṃ āvuso, abbhutāṃ āvuso, yatra hi nāma satthu ca sāvakassa ca attha atthaṃ vyāñjanena vyāñjanāṃ samsandissati samesati na viggahissati, yad idam aggapadasmim. "Friend, it is wonderful, it is marvellous, that there is perfect conformity between the statements of the teacher and the disciple to the letter and to the spirit without any discord on the question of the highest level of attainment."

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These last words, in particular, make it sufficiently clear that this concentration is arahattaphalasamādhī, the concentration proper to an arahant. Here, then, is the experience of Nibbāna, extraordinary and unique.

Quite a number of discourses touch upon this samādhi. Let us take up some of the more important references. Venerable Ānanda is seen to pose the same question, rephrased, on yet another occasion. It runs thus:

Siyaṃ nu kho, bhante, tathārūpo samādhipatiṭībhō yathā na cakkhuṃ manasikareyya, na rupe manasikareyya, na sotap manasikareyya, na saddaṃ manasikareyya, na ghānaṃ manasikareyya, na gandhaṃ manasikareyya, na jīvhaṃ manasikareyya, na rasam manasikareyya, na kāyaṃ manasikareyya, na phoṭṭhabbama manasikareyya, na pathaviṃ manasikareyya, na āpama manasikareyya, na tejama manasikareyya, na vāyama manasikareyya, na ākāsamaṅcāyatanaṃ manasikareyya, na viṅṇṭamaṅcāyatanaṃ manasikareyya, na ākāsamaṅcāyatanaṃ manasikareyya, na nevasaṅcāsaṅcāyatanaṃ manasikareyya, na idhalokam manasikareyya, na paralokam manasikareyya, yam pidaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ mutaṃ viñṇātaṃ pattamaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasaṃ tam pi na manasikareyya, manasi ca pana kareyya?

"Could there be, Lord, for a monk such an attainment of concentration wherein he will not be attending to the eye, nor to form, nor to the ear, nor to sound, nor to the nose, nor to smell, nor to the tongue, nor to taste, nor to the
“Bhante, could a bhikkhu obtain such a state of concentration that he would not attend to the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects; that he would not attend to earth, water, fire, or air; he would not attend to the base of the infinity of space, the base of the infinity of consciousness, the base of nothingness, or the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; he would not attend to this world; he would not attend to the other world; he would not attend to anything seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, sought after, and examined by the mind, but he would still be attentive?”

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Translation Bodhi (2012: 1560):

“Bhante, could a bhikkhu obtain such a state of concentration that he would not attend to the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects; that he would not attend to earth, water, fire, or air; he would not attend to the base of the infinity of space, the base of the infinity of consciousness, the base of nothingness, or the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; he would not attend to this world; he would not attend to the other world; he would not attend to anything seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, sought after, and examined by the mind, but he would still be attentive?”

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“Herein, Ānanda, a monk attends thus: ‘This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna.’ It is in this way, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu could obtain such a state of concentration …”

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In the light of the foregoing discussion, we are now in a position to take up for comment that enigmatic verse of the Kalahavivādasutta, which in a previous sermon we left unexplained, giving only a slight hint in the form of a simile.

Na saññasaññī na visaññasaññī,
no pi asaññī na vibhūtasaññī,
evam sametassa vibhoti rūpaṁ,
Translation Bodhi (2017: 306):
“Not percipient through perception,
not percipient through disturbed perception,
not altogether without perception,
not percipient of what has vanished:
form vanishes for one who has so attained,
for concepts due to proliferation are based on perception.”

不想想不色想, 非無想不行想
(CBETA, T04, no. 198, p. 181, c13)
“Not percipient of a perception or a formless perception,
Nor without perception or with dysfunctional perception.”

Ñāṇaponaika (1977: 331) relates vibhūtasāññī to Sn 1113 vibhūtarūpasāññī,
At Vin IV 109 being visaññī is the result of getting drunk (Sāgata story)

The term khittacittā visaññino in AN II 52 describes beings under the influence of the four saññāvipallāsā getting into wrong views “with minds deranged” and “disturbed/twisted perception”. Perhaps the idea of ‘hallucination’ would work at least for some instances of the term, such as hallucinating permanence etc. when in fact things are the opposite of it?

On these interpretations, the following correspondences could be made:
visaññasaññī= 不行想 (dysfunctional/disturbed/twisted perception),
vibhūta[rūpa]saññī= 不色想 (formless perception)

In this way a tetralemma-type of presentation would emerge in reply to the question katham sametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ, sukhaṃ dukhaṃ vā pi katham vibhoti? “How must one attain for [name-and]-form to vanish? How do pleasure and pain also vanish?”

a) not [normal] perception (i.e. of form) saññasaññī, 想想
b) not opposite: perception of formless, vibhūtasāññī, 不色想
c) not mixture of both: hallucination (?) visaññasaññī, 不行想
d) not neither of both: unconscious asaññī, 無想

Muni Bhikkhu (2018: 174n9) on the verse na saññasaññī comments that this “has sometimes been taken to refer to the anupādisesa nibbānadhātu (Ñāṇananda, Concept and Reality). This I think is a mistake. The [next] verse
refers to aggam yakkhassa suddhiṃ (“the highest purity of the spirit”). This is echoed in the Kosala Sutta (AN 10:29) which has paramayakkhavisuddhiṃ (so all Sinhalese manuscripts, though the Burmese and all editions have paramathavisuddhiṃ). In this Sutta the “highest purity of the spirit” is identified as nevasaññānāsaññāyatana. This may well be the meaning also here. Note that all these states have to be overcome, and that the Arahat is referred to only in the last verse of the Kalahavivāda Sutta.”

AN 10.29 etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, paramatthavisuddhiṃ paññāpentānaṃ yadidaṃ sabbaso ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati

(The reading in the Burmese, PTS and Ceylonese editions is paramatthavisuddhiṃ, only Siamese edition and Ceylonese manuscript mentioned in PTS edition footnote have paramayakkhavisuddhiṃ)

Translation Bodhi (2012: 1383): “Of those who proclaim supreme purification, this is the foremost, namely, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, one enters and dwells in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.”

Parallel MĀ 215 “This is the foremost among heterodox views, the best among heterodox views, namely: ‘Completely transcending perceptions of form ... up to ... he enters and dwells in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.”

「第一外依見處，最依見處」 (CBETA, T01, no. 26, p. 800, b12)

Sn 478: sarīrañ ca antimaṃ dhāreti, patto ca sambodhim anuttaraṃ sivaṃ; ettāvatā yakkhassa suddhi.

“Who bears the final body and has attained the bliss of unsurpassed full awakening, to that extent there is yakkhassa suddhi.”

Before the verse, there is a progression related to dependent arising:

paridevasokā → chanda → sātaṃ asātañca → phassa → nāma-rūpa
dukkha → craving → feeling → contact → name-and-form

Next question is about the cessation of [name-and-]form as well as sukhā and dukkha, and it is reply to this that we get the verse na saññāsaññī etc.

After that comes, in the translation by Bodhi (2017: 206):

“You explained to us whatever we asked you. Let us now ask something else: please tell me this.

“Do some wise men here say that at this point
“Some wise men here say that at this point
this is the foremost purity of the spirit
But some among them, claiming to be skilled,
speak of an attainment without residue remaining.

“Having known these to be ‘dependent,)
and having known the dependencies, the muni, the investigator,
having known, liberated, does not enter disputes (na vivādam eti);
the wise one does not come upon various states of existence.”

The general trend of this verse seems to imply something like this: The
worldlings usually believe that one has to have some form of perception or
other. But the one referred to in this verse is not percipient with any such
perception, na saññasaññī. As if to forestall the question, whether he is then in a
swoon, there is the negation na visaññasaññī. A possible alternative, like a plane
of existence devoid of perception, is also avoided by the emphatic assertion no
pi asaññī. Yet another possibility, that he has gone beyond perception or
rescinded it, is rejected as well with the words na vibhūtasaññī.

The nature of these reckonings we have already discussed at length. The
conclusion here given is that they are rooted in papañca. Now the passages we
have so far quoted are suggestive of such a state of consciousness. Briefly
stated, even the emphatic tone characteristic of these discourses is sufficient
proof of it.

For instance, in the first discourse we took up for discussion, there is the
recurrent phrase na jhāyati, "does not muse", with reference to all the possible
objects of the senses, but at the end of it all comes the emphatic assertion jhāyati
capa, "nevertheless, he does muse". Similarly the passage dealing with the
saññā aspect starts with neva pathaviyam pathavisaññī, "he is neither conscious
(literally 'percipient') of earth in earth", followed by a long list of negations, only
to end up with an emphatic saññī ca pana assa, "but nevertheless he is
conscious". So also in the passage which takes up the attending aspect and
winds up with the assertion manasi ca pana kareyya, "and yet he will be
attending".

All this evidence is a pointer to the fact that we have to interpret the reference
to the paradoxical state of consciousness implied by na saññasaññī na
visaññasaññī etc. in the Kalahavivādasutta in the light of that unique concentration of the arahant - the arahattaphalasamādhi.

This is obvious enough even if we take into consideration the occurrence of the term papañcasāṅkhā in the last line of the verse in question. The worldly concepts born of the prolific tendency of the mind are rooted in perception. That is precisely why perception has to be transcended. That is also the reason for our emphasis on the need for freedom from the six sense-bases and from contact. The abandonment of papañcasāṅkhā is accomplished at this extraordinary level of concentration.

The immense importance attached to the arahattaphalasamādhi comes to light in the passages we have quoted. These discourses are abundant proof of the fact that the Buddha has extolled this samādhi in various ways. The verse beginning with na saññasaññī na visaññasaññī in particular points to this fact.

On an earlier occasion we gave only a clue to its meaning in the form of an allusion to our simile of the cinema. That is to say, while one is watching a film show, if the cinema hall is fully illuminated all of a sudden, one undergoes such an internal transformation, that it becomes questionable whether he is still seeing the film show. This is because his perception of the film show has undergone a peculiar change. He is no longer conscious of a film show, nor has he put an end to consciousness. It is a strange paradox. His gaze is actually a vacant gaze.

The verse in question expresses such a vacant gaze. When the six sense-bases of the arahant cease and the lustre of wisdom comes up, giving the conviction that all assets in the world are empty, the vision in the arahattaphalasamādhi is as vacant as that gaze of the man at the cinema. It is neither conscious, nor unconscious, nor non-conscious, nor totally devoid of consciousness. At that level of concentration even this material form is abandoned.

The line in the paean of joy in the Bāhiyasutta, which we came across the other day, atha rūpā arūpā ca, sukhadukkha pamuccati, "and then from form and formless and from pleasure and pain is he freed", can be better appreciated in the light of the foregoing discussion. With the relinquishment of all assets, even this body and the experience of a form and of a formless, as well as pleasure and pain, cease altogether due to the cessation of contact. That is why Nibbāna is called a bliss devoid of feeling, avedayita sukha.

Now as to this vacant gaze, there is much to be said, though one might think that it is not at all worth discussing about. If someone asks us: 'What is the object of the gaze of one with such a vacant gaze', what shall we say? The vacant gaze is, in fact, not established anywhere (appatiṭṭham). It has no existence (appavattaṃ) and it is object-less (anārammaṇaṃ). Even at the mention of these three terms, appatiṭṭham, appavattaṃ and anārammaṇaṃ, some might recall those highly controversial discourses on Nibbāna.

Why do we call the vision of the arahant a vacant gaze? At the highest point of the development of the three characteristics impermanence, suffering and not-self, that is, through the three deliverances animitta, appāṇihita and suññata, the "signess", the "undirected" and the "void", the arahant is now looking at the
object with a penetrative gaze. That is why it is not possible to say what he is looking at. It is a gaze that sees the cessation of the object, a gaze that penetrates the object, as it were.

When the cinema hall is fully illuminated, the mind of the one with that vacant gaze at the film show does not accumulate the stuff that makes up a film. Why? Because all those cinema preparations are now stilled, cinema assets are relinquished and the craving and the passion for the cinema film have gone down, at least temporarily, with the result that the cinema film has 'ceased' for him and he is 'extinguished' within. That is why he is looking on with a vacant gaze. With this illustration one can form an idea about the inner transformation that occurs in the *arahant*.

From the very outset the meditator is concerned with *saṅkhāras*, or preparations. Hence the term *sabbasaṅkhārasamatha*, the stilling of all preparations, comes first. Instead of the arising aspect of preparations, he attends to the cessation aspect, the furthest limit of which is Nibbāna. It is for that reason that the term *nirodha* is directly applied to Nibbāna.

Simply because we have recapitulated the terms forming the theme of our sermons, some might think that the formula as such is some form of a gross object of the mind. This, in fact, is the root of the misconception prevalent today.

It is true that the Buddha declared that the *arahant* has as his perception, attention and concentration the formula beginning with *etaṃ santam etaṃ pañītaṃ* etc. But this does not mean that the *arahant* in his *samādhi* goes on reciting the formula as we do at the beginning of every sermon. What it means is that the *arahant* reverts to or re-attains the realization he has already won through the lustre of wisdom, namely the realization of the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the total abandonment of the five aggregates, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation and extinguishment. That is what one has to understand by the saying that the *arahant* attends to Nibbāna as his object.

The object is cessation, *nirodha*. Here is something that Māra cannot grasp, that leaves him utterly clueless. This is why Venerable Nandiya in the *Nandiyatheragāthā* challenges Māra in the following verse:

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Obhāsajātaṃ phalagāṃ,
cittaṃ yassa abhiññhoso,
tādisam bhikkhum āsajja
kaṇha dukkhamā nigacchasi.
"The monk whose mind is always bright, 
And gone to the fruit of arahant-hood, 
Should you dare to challenge that monk, 
O Blackie, you only come to grief."
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Translation Norman (1969: 4):
“Attacking such a bhikkhu, 
Whose mind is like splendour 
Constantly fruitful 
You will come to grief, Kaṇṭha.”

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Kaṇṭha, Blackie, is one of the epithets of Māra. Even gods and Brahmās are unable to find out the object of the arahant’s mind when he is in the phalasamāpatti, the attainment to the fruit. Māra can never discover it. That is why this attainment is said to leave Māra clueless or deluded (Mārassetam pamohanaṃ). All this is due to the uniqueness of this level of concentration.

The three deliverances animitta, appaññihita and suññata, are indeed extraordinary and the verse na saññā saññī refers to this arahattaphalasamādhi, which is signless, undirected and void.

Usually one’s vision alights somewhere or picks up some object or other, but here is a range of vision that has no horizon. In general, there is a horizon at the furthest end of our range of vision. Standing by the seaside or in a plain, one gazes upon a horizon where the earth and sky meet. The worldling’s range of vision, in general, has such a horizon. But the arahant’s range of vision, as here described, has no such horizon. That is why it is called anantar, endless or infinite. Viññānām anidassanānām, anantar sabbato pabhām, “the non-manifestative consciousness, endless, lustrous on all sides.”

That vacant gaze is an ‘endless’ perception. One who has it cannot be called conscious, saññī. Nor can he be called unconscious, visaññī - in the worldly sense of the term. Nor is he devoid of consciousness, asaññī. Nor has he put an end to consciousness, vibhūtasaññī.

Let us now take up two verses which shed a flood of light on the foregoing discussion and help illuminate the meaning of canonical passages that might come up later. The two verses are from the Arahantavagga of the Dhammapada.

Yesaṃ sannicayo natthi, 
ye pariññāta bhojanā, 
suññato animitto ca, 
vimokkho yesa gocaro, 
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ, 
gati tesam durannayā. 
Yass’āsavā parikkhīnā, 
āhāre ca anissito, 
suññato animitto ca, 
vimokkho yassa gocaro, 
ākāse va sakuntānaṃ, 
padam tassa durannayām.

"Those who have no accumulations, 
And understood fully the subject of food, 
And whose feeding ground
Is the void and the signless,
Their track is hard to trace,
Like that of birds in the sky.
He whose influxes are extinct,
And is unattached to nutriment,
Whose range is the deliverance,
Of the void and the signless,
His path is hard to trace,
Like that of birds in the sky."

Translation Norman (2004: 14):
“Of whom there is no accumulation,
Who have knowledge of [and have renounced] food,
Whose realm is empty and unconditioned release,
Their going is hard to follow, like that of birds in the sky.”
Whose āsavas are destroyed,
And who is not dependent upon food,
whose realm is empty and unconditioned release,
His track is hard to follow, like that of birds in the sky.”

The accumulation here meant is not of material things, such as food. It is the accumulation of karma and upadhi, assets. The comprehension of food could be taken to imply the comprehension of all four nutriments, namely gross material food, contact, will and consciousness. The feeding ground of such arahants is the void and the signless. Hence their track is hard to trace, like that of birds in the sky.

The term gati, which we rendered by "track", has been differently interpreted in the commentary. For the commentary gati is the place where the arahant goes after death, his next bourne, so to speak. But taken in conjunction with the simile used, gati obviously means the "path", padam, taken by the birds in the sky. It is the path they take that cannot be traced, not their destination.
Where the birds have gone could perhaps be traced, with some difficulty. They may have gone to their nests. It is the path they went by that is referred to as gati in this context. Just as when birds fly through the sky they do not leave behind any trace of a path, even so in this concentration of the arahant there is no object or sign of any continuity.

The second verse gives almost the same idea. It is in singular and speaks of an arahant whose influxes are extinct and who is unattached to nutriment. Here, in the simile about the birds in the sky, we find the word padam, "path", used instead of gati, which makes it clear enough that it is not the destiny of the arahant that is spoken of.

The commentary, however, interprets both gati and padam as a reference to the arahant’s destiny. There is a tacit assumption of some mysterious
anupādisesa Nibbānadhātu. But what we have here is a metaphor of considerable depth. The reference is to that unique samādhī.

The bird's flight through the air symbolizes the flight of the mind. In the case of others, the path taken by the mind can be traced through the object it takes, but not in this case. The key word that highlights the metaphorical meaning of these verses is gocaro. Gocara means "pasture". Now, in the case of cattle roaming in their pasture one can trace them by their footsteps, by the path trodden. What about the pasture of the arahants?

Of course, they too consume food to maintain their bodies, but their true 'pasture' is the arahattaphalasamādhi. As soon as they get an opportunity, they take to this pasture. Once they are well within this pasture, neither gods nor Brahmas nor Māra can find them. That is why the path taken by the arahants in the phalasamādhi cannot be traced, like the track of birds in the sky.

We have yet to discuss the subject of sa-upādisesa and anupādisesa Nibbānadhātu. But even at this point some clarity of understanding might emerge. When the arahant passes away, at the last moment of his life span, he brings his mind to this arahattaphalasamādhi. Then not even Māra can trace him. There is no possibility of a rebirth and that is the end of all. It is this 'extinction' that is referred to here.

This extinction is not something one gets in a world beyond. It is a realization here and now, in this world. And the arahant, by way of blissful dwelling here and now, enjoys in his everyday life the supreme bliss of Nibbāna that he had won through the incomparable deliverances of the mind.