

# The Nibbāna Sermons 23 to 33 by Bhikkhu K Ñāṇananda

*An e-learning course hosted by the*  
Numata Center for Buddhist Studies  
University of Hamburg  
*in collaboration with the*  
Barre Center for Buddhist Studies  
Massachusetts

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“In the seen just the seen: mindfulness and the construction of experience”,  
*Mindfulness*, 2019, 10.1: 179–184.  
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## Sermon 23

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

*Etaṃ santam, etaṃ paṇītam, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*  
*sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānam.*

"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 twentythird sermon in the series of sermons on *Nibbāna*.

The other day, we brought up quotations to prove that *Nibbāna*, as the cessation of becoming, carries no implications of a nihilist or annihilationist view because the *Tathāgata* has transcended the concept of a being.

It became evident, from those quotations, that to assert with an eternalist bias, the proposition that the *Tathāgata* exists after death, simply because he is referred to as a being, or a person, in the discourses, is contrary to the spirit of the *Dhamma*. The fact that the *arahant*, who has done away with the latencies to conceits of 'I' and 'mine', still continues to use even the words 'I' and 'mine', only as a concession to worldly conventions and common parlance, came to light from the *Arahantasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, quoted on an earlier occasion.

To remind ourselves of the relevant section of that quotation, we may hark back to the following lines:

*'Ahaṃ vadāmī'ti pi so vadeyya,*  
*'Mamaṃ vadantī'ti pi so vadeyya,*  
*Loke samaññaṃ kusalo veditvā,*

*Vohāramattena so vohareyya.*

"He might still say: 'I speak',  
He might also say: 'They speak to me',  
Being skilful in knowing the worldly parlance,  
He uses such terms merely as a convention."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 102):

"If a bhikkhu is an arahant,  
Consummate, with taints destroyed,  
One who bears his final body,  
He might still say, 'I speak,'  
And he might say, 'They speak to me.'  
Skilful, knowing the world's parlance,  
He uses such terms as mere expressions."

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The philosophy of voidness that emerges from those discourses which declare that in reality there is no *Tathāgata*, we compared to the blazing flames arising from the fistfuls of a highly inflammable incense powder at the end of an all-night's ceremony of devil dancing. Generally this fire ordeal is horrifying to the onlookers. The Buddha also had to stage a similar fire ordeal in the *Dhammayāga*, or the "*Dhamma*-sacrifice", he administered to exorcize the malignant personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, ingrained in the minds of worldlings.

Of course there is no explicit reference to such a fire ordeal in the discourses. However, we do come across a word somewhat suggestive of this kind of exorcism. The word *vidhūpeti*, derived from the word *dhūpa*, "incense", is suggestive of "fumigating" or "smoking out". For instance, we find the following verse in the *Bodhivagga* of the *Udāna* with reference to the stages of reflection on the law of dependent arising, in direct and reverse order, that the Buddha had gone through just after his enlightenment.

*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā,  
Ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa,  
Vidhūpayam tiṭṭhati Mārasenam,  
Suriyo 'va obhāsayam antalikkham.*  
"When *dhammas* manifest themselves,  
To the resolutely meditating Brahmin,  
He stands fumigating the hordes of *Māra*,  
Like the sun irradiating the firmament."

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Translation Ireland (1990: 13):

"When the truths become manifest  
To the ardent meditating brahmin,  
Scattering *Māra*'s host he stands,  
As does the sun illuminating the sky."

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The dispelling of the hordes of *Māra* is rather suggestive of a smoking out. In some other discourses, this verb *vidhūpeti* is found contrasted with *sandhūpeti*. The meaning of both these verbs, which have the *dhūpa* element in common, is not quite clear. It is likely that the two words imply two functions of the ritual associated with incense. While some fragrant kinds of incense are used for propitiating benevolent spirits, certain caustic types are utilized for exorcising evil spirits.

For instance in the *Khajjanīyasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, with reference to the noble disciple, the phrase *vidhūpeti na sandhūpeti* occurs. Since the implicit reference is again to the hordes of *Māra*, the phrase could be rendered as "he exorcises and does not propitiate".

The ordinary worldling's mode of recognition of the *Tathāgata* is comparable to the recognition of a vortex that has already ceased with the help of the flotsam and jetsam lightly floating around it. Even after the vortex has ceased, flotsam and jetsam could still go on rotating, giving the wrong impression that the vortex is still there. If one understands that the vortex has actually ceased deep down at its centre, and that what remains there, now, is the great ocean, undifferentiated and unique, one can get rid of the unfounded fear arising from the statement that there is no *Tathāgata* in truth and fact.

The cessation of the puny centre of the whirlpool is equivalent to inheriting an expansive great ocean. It is where a vortex ceases that the great ocean prevails unhindered. To give up the limitations of a vortex, is to inherit the limitless ocean. The irony arising from these statements is already implicit in the term *arahant*. We use this term with reference to the Buddha as well as the *arahants*. Though the commentators later attributed various other meanings to the term, the basic sense is "to be worthy of gifts". In fact, it is being worthy of receiving everything.

It is by giving up all that one becomes worthy of all.

Here too, we have a paradox. To become an *arahant* is to let go of everything. Craving has to be fully abandoned. It is when all desires are gone, when everything is given up, that one becomes worthy of receiving everything. This is the deeper side of the significance of the term *arahant*.

There are six modes of measuring in accordance with the conceit 'am', *asmimāna*. What is known as *saḷāyatana*, or the six sense-bases, comprise the six scales of measurement, asserting the conceit 'am'. At whatever point of time the measuring, evaluating and assessing done by the six sense-bases, such as the eye, ear, nose etc., ceases, the person concerned thereby becomes immeasurable, invaluable and boundless. It is here that the simile of the vortex and the ocean becomes meaningful. So the only way of becoming immeasurable and boundless is to abandon all those scales of measurement. This might sound extremely strange.

With the cessation of a vortex, the attention of one who has been looking at it turns towards the depth, immeasurability and boundlessness of the great ocean. This line of reflection might even enable one to get a glimpse of an unworldly

beauty in this philosophy of the void, which drives an unfounded fear into the minds of the worldlings.

We do get positive proof of this fact in such sections of the *Dhammapada* as those entitled The Flowers, The Worthy, The Buddha and The Brahmin, as well as in a number of discourses in the *Sutta Nipāta*, where we come across marvellously scintillating verses. This is understandable, since the dawn of that wisdom which sees the voidness of a self and of everything belonging to a self, and the attainment of the fruits of the path in the light of that wisdom, marks the efflorescence as well as the fruition of the *samsāric* existence of a being.

This idea comes up, for instance, in the section on flowers in the *Dhammapada*.

*Yathā saṅkārādhānasmim,  
Ujjhitasmim mahāpathe,  
Padumaṃ tattha jāyetha,  
Sucigandhaṃ manoramaṃ.*

*Evaṃ saṅkārābhūtesu,  
andhabhūte puthujjane,  
atirocati paññāya,  
sammāsambuddhasāvako.*

"As on top of a rubbish heap,  
Dumped by the highway side,  
There blossoms forth a lotus,  
Pure in fragrance and charming.

So amidst the worldlings blind,  
The Fully Awakened One's disciple,  
Outshines them in marked contrast,  
In point of wisdom bright."

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Translation Norman (2004: 9):

"Just as on a heap of rubbish  
Thrown on the high road,  
A lotus might grow  
With sweet smell, delighting the mind,  
Similarly among common people  
Who are blind and like rubbish,  
The disciple of the Fully Awakened One  
Shines forth by reason of his wisdom."

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So, then, the *arahant* is that charming lotus, arising out of the cesspool of *samsāra*. Surely there cannot be anything frightful about it. There is nothing to get scared about this prospect.

In our last sermon we quoted from a discourse that gives some new definitions and new concepts of the world. We brought up two statements from the *Lokakāmaguṇasutta* (No. 1) of the *Saḷāyatanavagga* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*.

The first statement is somewhat riddle-like. There the Buddha addresses the monks and declares:

*Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñātayaṃ, daṭṭhayaṃ, pattayyan'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."

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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*."

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We also mentioned, the other day, the explanation given by Venerable Ānanda to this cryptic statement at the request of those monks who approached him to get it clarified. That explanation embodies the definition given by the Buddha to the term world. It is not the common concept of the world.

*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 has 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 ... 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'."

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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)

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That with which the world is measured, that itself is called 'the world'. The above-mentioned measuring rods, namely the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, give us a conceit of the world and a perception of the world. Apart from these six there is no way of knowing a world. All theories about the world are founded on these six sense-bases.

By way of a simple illustration, we alluded to the fact that in the absence of any standard measuring rod, we resort to the primordial scales based on this physical frame of ours, such as the inch, the span, the foot and the fathom. The subtlest scale of measurement, however, is that based on the mind. It is in this mode of measuring and reckoning that concepts and designations play their part. But the Buddha's philosophy of the void goes against all these mental modes. His exorcism by the vision of the void fumigates all concepts and designations.

The six sense-bases are therefore so many scales of measurement. It is with the help of these that the world is measured. So the above definition of the world brings out the "prepared", *sāṅkhata*, nature of the world. It is a thought-construct.

This does not amount to a negation of the role of materiality. All we mean to say is that the concept of the world is actually an outcome of these six sense bases. To that extent it is something prepared, a thought-construct.

While discussing the ten indeterminate points on a previous occasion, we happened to mention that the first four among them concern the world.

1. "The world is eternal".
2. "The world is not eternal".
3. "The world is finite".
4. "The world is infinite".

What those theorists meant by the term world in this context is none other than that prepared world which is constructed by the six sense-bases. That is to say, it is just the concept of the world.

However, they were not aware of the fact that their concept of the world is a thought-construct, because they had no insight into the law of dependent arising. They did not understand that these are mere preparations. The fallacy involved here, that is, the inability to understand that their concept of the world is the outcome of wrong attention, we illustrated by the simile of the magic kettle.

In an exhibition a magic kettle is displayed from which water keeps on flowing into a basin. One curious onlooker is waiting to see the kettle empty, while the other is waiting to see the basin overflowing. Both are unaware of the fact that a hidden tube conveys the water back again to the kettle, unseen through the same flow of water.

The ordinary concept of the world carries with it the same fallacy. The worldlings under the sway of defilements, which thrive on the perception of the compact, *ghanasaññā*, have the habit of grasping everything. The ordinary man of the world, fully overcome by craving and grasping, entertains a perception of permanence since he has no insight. That is why he regards the world as a unit due to his perception of the compact, as he takes cognizance only of the arising aspect, ignoring the decaying aspect.

Whether such a world is eternal or not, is the point at issue in the case of the first set of questions mentioned above, while the next set poses the dilemma whether it is finite or infinite. What is at the root of all those ill-conceived notions, is the premise that it is possible to posit an absolute existence or an absolute non-existence. In other words, the two extreme views 'everything exists' and 'nothing exists'.

The unique norm of dependent arising, which the Buddha discovered, dismisses both those extreme views. It is set forth in the *Kaccāyanagottasutta* of the *Nidānasamyutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which we have quoted earlier too. We shall, however, bring up again the relevant section to elucidate this point.

*Dvayanissito khvāyaṃ, Kaccāyana, loko yebhuyyena: atthitañceva natthitañca. Lokasamudayaṃ kho, Kaccāyana, yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti. Lokanirodhaṃ kho, Kaccāyana, yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti.*

"This world, *Kaccāyana*, for the most part, bases its views on two things: on existence and non-existence. Now, *Kaccāyana*, to one who with right wisdom sees the arising of the world as it is, the view of non-existence regarding the world does not occur. And to one who with right wisdom sees the cessation of the world as it really is, the view of existence regarding the world does not occur."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 544)

“This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends on a duality—upon the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. But for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of nonexistence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world.”

Tripāthī (1962: 167):

*dvayaṃ niśrito 'yaṃ kātyāyana loko yad bhūyasāsthitāñ ca niśrito nāstitāñ ca ... lokasamudayaṃ kātyāyana yathābhūtaṃ samyakprajñayā paśyato ya loke nāstitā sā na bhavati. lokanirodhaṃ yathābhūtaṃ samyakprajñayā paśyato yā loke 'stitā sā na bhavati.*

SĀ 301

「世間有二種依，若有、若無」 (CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 85, c21)

「世間集如實正知見，若世間無者不有，世間滅如實正知見，若世間有者無有」 (CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 85, c26-28)

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This is where our simile of the magic kettle becomes meaningful. Had both onlookers understood that the magic kettle is getting filled at the same time it gets emptied, and that the basin also gets filled while it is being emptied, they would not have the curiosity to go on looking at it.

In contradistinction to both these viewpoints, the law of dependent arising promulgated by the Buddha transcends them by penetrating into the concept as such. The Buddha explained the arising of the world in terms of the twelve factors, beginning with "dependent on ignorance preparations", precisely because it cannot be presented in one word.

Usually, the formula of dependent arising is summed up with the words *ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo*, "this is the arising of suffering", or with the more conclusive statement *evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*, "thus is the arising of this entire mass of suffering".

There are also instances of explaining the arising of the world through the principle underlying the norm of dependent arising. The world arises in the six sense-bases. It is at the same time the arising of suffering. The arising of suffering is almost synonymous with the arising of the world.

The law of dependent arising is an explanation of the way a concept of the world comes about. This is an extremely subtle point. Since the concept of the world is a product of wrong reflection, it is *sañkhata*, or "prepared". It is like something imagined. The *sañkhata*, or the "prepared", has a certain circularity about it.

In fact, the two dilemmas mentioned above involve the question of time and space. The question whether the world is eternal or not eternal concerns time, whereas the question whether the world is finite or infinite relates to space. Both

time and space involve a circularity. The furthest limit of the forenoon is the nearest limit of the afternoon, and the furthest limit of the afternoon is the nearest limit of the forenoon. This is how the cycle of the day turns round. Where the forenoon ends is the afternoon, where the afternoon ends is the forenoon.

A similar time cycle is to be found even in one moment. Rise and fall occur as a cycle even within a single moment. The same process goes on within an aeon. That is why an aeon is said to have the two aspects called *saṃvatta*, "contraction", and *vivaṭṭa*, "expansion". World systems go on contracting and expanding.

The so-called existence of the world is a continuous process of contraction and expansion. Therefore it is impossible to find any beginning or end. The very question of a first beginning is ill conceived. It is like an attempt to find a starting point in a cycle. It is a problem that cannot be solved by speculation.

Because of the cyclic nature of existence, rise and fall is characteristic of every single moment. It is by ignoring the decaying aspect inherent in one moment that wrong reflection gives rise to the inference that there must be an absolute end of the world.

Because the visible world gets destroyed, one conceives of an absolute end of the world. But when one world system gets destroyed, another world system gets crystallized somewhere else. Speculative views and standpoints about the universe, current among the worldlings, are of such a misleading nature that any reasoning based on them leads to a circularity of argument as is evident from the *Lokāyatikābrāhmaṇāsutta* among the Nines of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.

This discourse is about two *Lokāyatikābrāhmins*. The term *Lokāyatika* is a derivative from *lokāyata*, which signifies a branch of knowledge dealing with the length and breadth of the world, perhaps a prototype of modern science, though it relied more on logic than on experiment. The two Brahmins were probably students of such a branch of learning. One day they came to the Buddha and posed this question:

"Sire Gotama, now there is this teacher *Pūraṇa Kassapa* who claims omniscience, saying that he sees everything and has knowledge and vision of everything while walking or standing, whether asleep or awake. With these claims to omniscience, he makes the following declaration:"

*Ahaṃ anantena ñāṇena anantaṃ lokaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ viharāmi.* "I dwell knowing and seeing an infinite world with an infinite knowledge."

"But then there is this teacher *Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta* who also has similar claims to omniscience, but declares: *Ahaṃ antavantena ñāṇena antavantaṃ lokaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ viharāmi.* "I dwell knowing and seeing a finite world with a finite knowledge."

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Translation Bodhi (2012: 1303)

Master Gotama, Pūraṇa Kassapa claims to be all-knowing and all-seeing and to have all-embracing knowledge and vision:

‘Whether I am walking, standing, sleeping, or awake, knowledge and vision are constantly and continuously present to me.’ He says thus: ‘With infinite knowledge, I dwell knowing and seeing the world to be infinite.’

But Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta also claims to be all-knowing and all-seeing and to have all-embracing knowledge and vision:

‘Whether I am walking, standing, sleeping, and awake, knowledge and vision are constantly and continuously present to me.’ He says thus: ‘With finite knowledge, I dwell knowing and seeing the world to be finite.’

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Then the two Brahmins ask the Buddha which of these two teachers claiming omniscience in such contradictory terms is correct. But the Buddha's reply was: *Alaṃ brāhmaṇā, tiṭṭhat' etaṃ ... Dhammaṃ vo desissāmi*, "enough, brahmins, let that question be ... I shall preach to you the *Dhamma*."

The expression used here is suggestive of the fact that the question belongs to the category of unexplained points. Terms like *ṭhapita*, "left aside", and *ṭhapanīya*, "should be left aside", are used with reference to indeterminate points.

Why did the Buddha leave the question aside? We can guess the reason, though it is not stated as such. Now the standpoint of *Pūraṇa Kassapa* is: "I dwell knowing and seeing an infinite world with an infinite knowledge." One can question the validity of his claim with the objection: You see an infinite world, because your knowledge is not finite, that is to say, incomplete. If it is complete, there must be an end. Therefore, going by the sense of incompleteness in the word *anantaṃ*, one can refute the former view. Why you see the world as infinite is because your knowledge lacks finality.

*Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta*, on the other hand, is asserting that he sees a finite world with a finite knowledge. But the followers of *Pūraṇa Kassapa* can raise the objection: you are seeing the world as finite because your knowledge is limited. Your knowledge has an end, that is why you see a finite world. So here, too, we have a circle, or rather a circularity of argument. The two terms *anta* and *ananata* are ambiguous. That must be the reason why the Buddha rejected the two standpoints in question.

Then he declares: "I shall preach to you the *Dhamma*", and brings up as a simile an illustration which could be summed up as follows. Four persons endowed with the highest ability to walk, the highest speed and the widest stride possible, stand in the four directions. Their speed is that of an arrow and their stride is as wide as the distance between the eastern ocean and the western ocean. Each of them tells himself: 'I will reach the end of the world by walking' and goes on walking for hundred years, that being his full life-span, resting just for eating, drinking, defecating, urinating and giving way to sleep or fatigue, only to die on the way without reaching the end of the world.

'But why so?', asks the Buddha rhetorically and gives the following explanation. "I do not say, O! Brahmins, that the end of the world can be known, seen or reached by this sort of running. Nor do I say that there is an ending of

suffering without reaching the end of the world." Then he declares: "Brahmins, it is these five strands of sense pleasures that in the Noble One's discipline are called 'the world'".

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Translation Bodhi (2012: 1304)

"I say, brahmins, that by this kind of running one cannot know, see, or reach the end of the world. And yet I say that without having reached the end of the world there is no making an end of suffering. These five objects of sensual pleasure, brahmins, are called 'the world' in the Noble One's discipline."

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In this particular context, the Buddha calls these five kinds of sense-pleasures 'the world' according to the Noble One's terminology. This does not contradict the earlier definition of the world in terms of the six sense-bases, for it is by means of these six sense-bases that one enjoys the five strands of sense-pleasures. However, as an art of preaching, the Buddha defines the world in terms of the five strands of sense-pleasures in this context.

Then he goes on to proclaim the way of transcending this world of the five sense pleasures in terms of *jhānic* attainments. When one attains to the first *jhāna*, one is already far removed from that world of the five sense-pleasures. But about him, the Buddha makes the following pronouncement:

*Aham pi, brāhmaṇā, evaṃ vadāmi: 'ayam pi lokapariyāpanno, ayam pi anissaṭo lokamhā'ti,* "and I too, O! Brahmins, say this: "This one, too, is included in the world, this one, too, has not stepped out of the world". The Buddha makes the same pronouncement with regard to those who attain to the other *jhānic* levels. But finally he comes to the last step with these words:

*Puna ca paraṃ, brāhmaṇā, bhikkhu sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkama saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati, paññāya c' assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. Ayaṃ vuccati, brāhmaṇā, bhikkhu lokassa antam āgamma lokassa ante viharati tiṅṅo loke visattikaṃ.*

"But then, O! Brahmins, a monk, having completely transcended the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, attains to and abides in the cessation of perceptions and feelings, and in him, having seen with wisdom, the influxes are made extinct. This one, O! Brahmins, is known as one who, on reaching the end of the world, is dwelling at its very end, having crossed over the agglutinative craving".

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Translation Bodhi (2012: 1304)

Again, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling, and having seen with wisdom, his taints are utterly destroyed. This is called a bhikkhu who, having come to the end of the world, dwells at the end of the world, one who has crossed over attachment to the world.

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Going by these discourses, one might conclude that the cessation of perceptions and feelings is actually *Nibbāna* itself. But the most important part of the above quotation is the statement *paññāya c' assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*, "having seen with wisdom, the influxes are made extinct in him". While in the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, all preparations subside and it is on rising from it that all influxes are made extinct by the vision of wisdom.

This fact comes to light in the following answer of Venerable *Dhammadinnā Therī* to the question raised by the lay-follower *Visākha*, her former husband, in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*.

*Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitaṃ, kho āvuso Visākha, bhikkhuṃ tayo phassā phusanti: suññato phasso, animitta phasso, appaṇihito phasso.* "Friend *Visākha*, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, three kinds of contact touch him: voidness contact, signless contact, desireless contact."

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Translation Ñāṇamoli (1995: 400)

"When a bhikkhu has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, three kinds of contact touch him: voidness contact, signless contact, desireless contact."

MĀ 211

"When a monk emerges from the concentration of cessation he contacts three types of contact. What are the three? One: imperturbable contact, two: nothingness contact, and three: signless contact"

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On this point, the commentary too, gives the explanation *suññatā nāma phalasangāhā*, "'voidness' means the attainment of the fruit of *arahant*-hood".

In answer to another question, Venerable *Dhammadinnā Therī* says, *Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa, kho āvuso Visākha, bhikkhuno vivekaninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti vivekaṇaṃ vivekapabbhāraṃ*, "Friend *Visākha*, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, his mind inclines to seclusion, slants to seclusion, tends to seclusion".

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MĀ 210

"[When] a monk has emerged from the concentration of cessation, his mind delights in seclusion, it tends towards seclusion, it inclines towards seclusion."

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Here the commentary explains *nibbānaṃ viveko nāma*, "what is called seclusion is *Nibbāna*".

So it is on emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings, that is in the *arahattaphalasangāhā*, references to which we have cited

earlier, that *Nibbāna* is realized. It is then that one actually sees the end of the world.

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AN 5.166 at AN III 194:

*atha kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi: idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sīlasampanno samādhisampanno paññāsampanno saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjeyyāpi vuṭṭhaheyyāpi, atthetaṃ thānaṃ: no ce diṭṭheva dhamme aññaṃ ārādheyya, atikkammeva kabaḷikārāhārabhakkhānaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ aññataraṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upapanno saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjeyyāpi vuṭṭhaheyyāpi. atthetaṃ thānan ti.*

Translation Bodhi (2012: 779)

Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus: “Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu accomplished in virtuous behavior, concentration, and wisdom might enter and emerge from the cessation of perception and feeling. If he does not reach final knowledge in this very life, then, having been reborn among a certain group of mind-made [deities] that transcend the company of devas that subsist on edible food, he might [again] enter and emerge from the cessation of perception and feeling. There is this possibility.”

Vism 708 *kathaṃ vuṭṭhānan ti ? anāgāmissa anāgāmiphalluppattiyā, arahato arahattaphalluppattiyāti evaṃ dvedhā vuṭṭhānaṃ hoti.*

Translation Ñāṇamoli (1991: 737): How does emergence from it come about? The emergence comes about in two ways thus: by means of the fruition of non-return in the case of the non-returner, or by means of the fruition of arahantship in the case of the arahant.”

Griffith 1986/1991: 35 (*On Being Mindless*), suggests “to take Buddhaghosa’s mention of the occurrence of the ‘fruits’ as descriptive of the first mental events that occur upon leaving the attainment of cessation”.

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So from this we can well infer that in advancing a new definition of the world, in introducing a new concept of the world, the Buddha was not trying to sidetrack the moot point of the worldlings by bringing in something totally irrelevant. He was simply rejecting for some sound reason the worldlings’ concept of the world, which is born of wrong reflection, and illustrating the correct measuring rod, the true criterion of judgement regarding the origin of the concept of the world according to radical reflection.

Out of all the discourses dealing with the question of the end of the world and the end of suffering, perhaps the most significant is the *Rohitassa Sutta*, which is found in the *Sagāthakaṣaṃyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, as well as in the section of the Fours in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Once when the Buddha was staying at the *Jetavana* monastery at *Sāvattihī*, a deity named *Rohitassa* visited him in the night and asked the following question: "Where Lord one does not

get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, is one able, Lord, by travelling to come to know that end of the world or to see it or to get there?"

The Buddha replies: "Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 157)

"Is it possible, venerable sir, by travelling to know or to see or to reach the end of the world, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, and is not reborn?"

"As to that end of the world, friend, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, and is not reborn—I say that it cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling."

SĀ 1307

「時，彼赤馬天子白佛言：「世尊！頗有能行過世界邊，至不生、不老、不死處不？」

佛告赤馬：「無有能過世界邊，至不生、不老、不死處者。」 (CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 359, a13-16)

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When the Buddha gave this brief answer, the deity *Rohitassa* praised him with the following words of approbation: *Acchariyaṃ bhante, abbhutaṃ bhante, yāva subhāsitaṃ idaṃ bhagavatā*, "it is wonderful, Lord, it is marvellous, Lord, how well it is said by the Exalted One."

Why did he express his approbation? Because he had already realized the truth of the Buddha's statement by his own experience. Then he goes on to relate the whole story of his past life.

"In times past, Lord, I was a seer, *Rohitassa* by name, son of *Bhoja*, gifted so that I could fly through the air, and so swift, Lord, was my speed that I could fly just as quickly as a master of archery, well-trained, expert, proficient, a past master in his art, armed with a strong bow, could without difficulty send a light arrow far past the area coloured by a palm tree's shadow; and so great, Lord, was my stride that I could step from the eastern to the western ocean. In me, Lord, arose such a wish as this: 'I will arrive at the end of the world by walking'. And though such, Lord, was my speed and such my stride, and though with a life span of a century, living for a hundred years, I walked continuously for hundred years, except for the times spent in eating, drinking, chewing or tasting, or in answering calls of nature, and the time I gave to way to sleep or fatigue, yet I died on the way, without reaching the end of the world. Wonderful is it, O! Lord, marvellous is it, Lord, how well it is said by the Exalted One:

Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 157f)

“It is wonderful, venerable sir! It is amazing, venerable sir! How well this was stated by the Blessed One: ‘As to that end of the world, friend, ... I say that it cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling.’

“Once in the past, venerable sir, I was a seer named Rohitassa, son of Bhoja, possessed of spiritual power, able to travel through the sky. My speed was such, venerable sir, that I could move just as swiftly as a firm-bowed archer—trained, skilful, practised, experienced—could easily shoot past the shadow of a palmyra tree with a light arrow. My stride was such, venerable sir, that it seemed to reach from the eastern ocean to the western ocean.

Then, venerable sir, the wish arose in me: ‘I will reach the end of the world by travelling.’ Possessing such speed and such a stride, and having a life span of a hundred years, living for a hundred years, I travelled for a hundred years, without pausing except to eat, drink, take meals and snacks, to defecate and urinate, to sleep and dispel fatigue; yet I died along the way without having reached the end of the world.

SĀ 1307

赤馬天子白佛言：「奇哉！世尊！善說斯義。如世尊說言：『無過世界邊，至不生、不老、不死處[3]者。』所以者何？世尊！我自憶宿命，名曰赤馬，作外道仙人，得神通，離諸愛欲。我時，作是念：『我有如是[捷>捷]疾神足，如健士夫，以利箭橫射過多羅樹影之頃，能登一須彌，至一須彌，足躡東海，超至西海。』我時，作是念：『我今成就如是[捷>捷]疾神力，今日寧可求世界邊。』作是念已，即便發行，唯除食息便利，減節睡眠，常行百歲，於彼命終，竟不能[4]得過世界邊，至不生、不老、不死之處

」 (CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 359, a16-27)

It is at this point, that the Buddha comes out with a momentous declaration, while granting *Rohitassa's* approbation.

*Yattha kho, āvuso, na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na cavati na upapajjati, nāhaṃ taṃ 'gamanena lokassa antaṃ nāteyyaṃ daṭṭheyyaṃ patteyyan'ti vadāmi. Na cāhaṃ, āvuso, appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassantakiriyaṃ vadāmi. Api c'āhaṃ, āvuso, imasmiṃ yeva byāmamatte kaḷevare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca paṭipadaṃ.*

"Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at. But neither do I say, friend, that without having reached the end of the world there could be an ending of suffering. It is in this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind, that I declare lies the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

Translation Bodhi (2000: 157f)

“As to that end of the world, friend, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, and is not reborn—I say that it cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling.’

However, friend, I say that without having reached the end of the world there is no making an end to suffering. It is, friend, in just this fathom-high carcass endowed with perception and mind that I make known the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the way leading to the cessation of the world.

SĀ 1307

「佛告赤馬：「我今但以一尋之身，說於世界、世界集、世界滅、世界滅道跡。赤馬天子！

何等為世間？謂五受陰。何等為五？色受陰、受受陰、想受陰、行受陰、識受陰，是名世間。

何等為<世間>集？謂當來有愛，貪、喜俱，彼彼染著，是名世間集。

云何為世間滅？若彼當來有愛，貪、喜俱，彼彼染著無餘斷、捨、離、盡、無欲、滅、息、沒，是名世間滅。

何等為世間滅道跡？謂八聖道，正見、正志、正語、正業、正命、正方便、正念、正定，是名世間滅道跡」 (CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 359, a27-b7)

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This momentous declaration, which is comparable to a fearless lion's roar that puts all religious and philosophical systems to flight, has been misinterpreted by some who have not grasped its true significance. They say that according to this discourse the cessation of the world is not here and that only the other three are to be found in this fathom-long body.

Such misinterpretations are the result of taking seriously various far-fetched speculations of later origin about *Nibbāna*. According to them, *Nibbāna* is some mysterious non-descript place of rest for the *arahants* after their demise. One who goes by that kind of speculation is not ready to accept the Buddha's declaration that it is in this very fathom-long body with its perceptions and mind that a cessation of the world can be realized.

The commentary in this context simply observes that the four noble truths are to be found not in grass and twigs outside, but in this body consisting of the four elements. It has nothing more to add. A certain modern scholar has rightly pointed out that the commentator has missed a great opportunity for exegesis. The reason for the commentator's lack of interest, in the case of such a discourse of paramount importance, is probably his predilection for these later speculations on *Nibbāna*.

All what we have so far stated in explaining the significance of discourses dealing with the subject of *Nibbāna*, could even be treated as a fitting commentary to the *Rohitassasutta*.

The point of relevance is the couple of words *sasaññimhi samanake*, occurring in the discourse in question. This fathom-long physical frame is here associated with perceptions and mind. The expression used by the Buddha in this context is full of significance.

As we saw above, Venerable *Ānanda* defines the term 'world' as follows: *yena kho, āvuso, lokasmiṃ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī, ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko*. "Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and has a conceit of the world that in the discipline of the Noble Ones is called 'the world'."

The conceit of the world is a form of measuring with the mind. So the two words *sasaññimhi samanake* are suggestive of the concept of the world in the Noble Ones' discipline.

While discussing the significance of *arahattaphalasangāhī*, also known as *aññāphalasangāhī*, and *aññāvimokkha*, we had occasion to bring up such quotations as the following:

*Siyā nu kho, bhante, bhikkhuno tathārūpo samādhipaṭilābho yathā neva paṭhaviyaṃ paṭhavisaññī assa, na āpasmiṃ āposaññī assa, na tejasmiṃ tejosaññī assa, na vāyasmīṃ vāyosaññī assa, na ākāsañāncāyatane ākāsañāncāyatanaññī assa, na viññāṇaṇcāyatane viññāṇaṇcāyatanaññī assa, na ākiñcaññāyatane ākiñcaññāyatanaññī assa, na nevasaññānāsaññāyatane nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaññī assa, na idhaloke idhalokasaññī assa, na paraloke paralokasaññī assa, yam p'idaṃ diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṭaṃ 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 that 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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The *arahattaphalasangādhī* is so extraordinary that while in it one has no perception of earth, water, fire and air, or of this world, or of the other world, of whatever is seen, heard, sensed and cognized, but one is all the same percipient or conscious, *saññī ca pana assa*.

To the question: 'Of what is he percipient?', *kiṃ saññī?*, once Venerable *Sāriputta* gave the answer that the perception is of *Nibbāna* as the cessation of existence, *bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ*.

In another discourse that we happened to quote, the mode of questioning has the following sequence: "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" etc., but ends with the riddle like phrase "and yet he will be attending", *manasi ca pana kareyya*.

When the Buddha grants the possibility of such a concentration, Venerable *Ānanda* rejoins with an inquisitive "how could there be, Lord?", and the Buddha explains that what a monk attends to while in that attainment could be summed up in the stereotyped phrase:

*Etaṃ santam, etaṃ paṇītam, 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."

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Translation Bodhi (2012: 1558):

“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.”

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It is *Nibbāna*, then, that one attends to while in that attainment. So we find even the terms "perception", *saññā*, and "attention", *manasikāra*, being used in the context of *arahattaphalasangāpatti*, or "attainment to the fruit of arahant-hood".

Therefore, *Nibbāna* is not an experience as dry as a log of wood, but a state of serene awareness of its true significance. It is a transcendence of the world by realization of its cessation. That is why the two words *sasaññimhi samanake*, "with its perceptions and mind", have been used to qualify, *kaḷevare*, "physical frame", or "body", in the momentous declaration.

We also came across some instances in the discourses where the Buddha calls the cessation of the six sense-spheres itself *Nibbāna*. The most notable instance

is perhaps the *Kāmaguṇasutta* we had already quoted. As we saw, even its presentation is rather enigmatic. It runs.

*Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuṅca nirujjhati rūpasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha sotaṅca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha ghānaṅca nirujjhati gandhasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha jivhā ca nirujjhati rasasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha kāyo ca nirujjhati phoṭṭabbasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe yattha mano ca nirujjhati dhammasaññā ca virajjati, se āyatane veditabbe.*

"Therefore, monks, that sphere should be known wherein the eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away, the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away, the nose ceases and the perception of smells fades away, the tongue ceases and the perception of tastes fades away, the body ceases and the perception of tangibles fades away, the mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away, that sphere should be known."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 1191):

"Therefore, bhikkhus, that base should be understood, where the eye ceases and perception of forms fades away. That base should be understood, where the ear ceases and perception of sounds fades away ... That base should be understood, where the mind ceases and perception of mental phenomena fades away. That base should be understood."

SĀ 211

是故，比丘！於彼入處當覺知，若眼滅，色想則離。耳、鼻、舌、身、意滅，法想則離

(CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 53, b12-14)

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Venerable *Ānanda*, commenting on this riddle-like sermon of the Buddha, concludes that the Buddha is here referring to the cessation of the six sense-spheres, *saḷāyatananirodham, āvuso, Bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitaṃ*. "Friends, it is with reference to the cessation of the six sense-spheres that the Exalted One has preached this sermon."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 1191):

"This was stated by the Blessed One, friends, with reference to the cessation of the six sense bases."

SĀ 211

「世尊略說者，即是滅六入處有餘之說」

(CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 53, c2-3)

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The cessation of the six sense-spheres is *Nibbāna*.

All this goes to show that the concept of a world is the product of the six sense-spheres. Those six measuring rods have measured out a world for us.

Since the world is built up by the six sense-spheres, it has also to cease by the cessation of those six sense-spheres. That is why *Nibbāna* is defined as the cessation of the six sense-spheres, *salāyatananirodho Nibbānaṃ*. All those measuring rods and scales lose their applicability with the cessation of the six sense-spheres.

How can there be an experience of cessation of the six sense-spheres? The cessation here meant is actually the cessation of the spheres of contact. A sphere of contact presupposes a duality. Contact is always between two things, between eye and forms, for instance. It is because of a contact between two things that one entertains a perception of permanence in those two things. Dependent on that contact, feelings and perceptions arise, creating a visual world. The visual world of the humans differs from that of animals. Some things that are visible to animals are not visible to humans. That is due to the constitution of the eye-faculty. It is the same with regard to the ear-faculty. These are the measuring rods and scales which build up a world.

Now this world, which is a product of the spheres of sense-contact, is a world of *papañca*, or "proliferation". *Nibbāna* is called *nippapañca* because it transcends this proliferation, puts an end to proliferation. The end of proliferation is at the same time the end of the six sense-spheres.

There is a discourse in the section of the Fours in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* which clearly brings out this fact. There we find Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* putting a question to Venerable *Sāriputta* on this point. Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* and Venerable *Sāriputta* are often found discussing intricate points in the *Dhamma*, not because they are in doubt, but in order to clarify matters for us. They are thrashing out problems for our sake. In this particular instance, Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* puts the following question to Venerable *Sāriputta*:

*Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāganirodhā atth'aññaṃ kiñci?*  
"Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is there something left?"

Venerable *Sāriputta's* response was: *Mā hevaṃ āvuso*, "do not say so, friend." Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* follows it up with three other possible alternatives, all of which Venerable *Sāriputta* dismisses with the same curt reply. The three alternatives are:

*Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāganirodhā natth' aññaṃ kiñci?*  
"Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is there nothing left?"

*Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāganirodhā atthi ca natthi ca aññaṃ kiñci?* "Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, is it the case that there is and is not something left?"

*Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāganirodhā nev'atthi no natth'aññaṃ kiñci?* "Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of

the six spheres of sense-contact, is it the case that there neither is nor is not something left?"

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 539)

“Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, is there anything else?”

“Do not say so, friend.”

“With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, is there nothing else?”

“Do not say so, friend.”

“With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, is there both something else and nothing else?”

“Do not say so, friend.”

“With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, is there neither something else nor nothing else?”

“Do not say so, friend.”

SĀ 249

The venerable Ānanda asked the venerable Sāriputta: “When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there something that still remains?”

The venerable Sāriputta said to Ānanda: “You should not ask this question: ‘When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there something that still remains?’”

Ānanda asked the venerable Sāriputta again: “When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there nothing that still remains?”

The venerable Sāriputta said to Ānanda: “It is also not proper to ask in this way: ‘When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there nothing that still remains?’”

Ānanda asked the venerable Sāriputta again: “When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there something that remains and nothing that remains, or neither something that remains nor nothing that remains?”

The venerable Sāriputta said to Ānanda: “It is also not proper to ask in this way: ‘When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there something that remains and nothing that remains, or neither something that remains nor nothing that remains?’”

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The mode of questioning takes the form of a tetralemma and Venerable *Sāriputta* dismisses all the four alternatives as inapplicable. Then Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* asks why all these four questions were ruled out, and Venerable *Sāriputta* explains:

*'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā atth' aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti. 'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā natth'aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti. 'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā atthi ca natthi ca aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti. 'Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā nev'atthi no natth'aññaṃ kiñcī'ti, iti vadaṃ appapañcaṃ papañceti.*

*Yāvatā, āvuso, channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ gati tāvatā papañcassa gati, yāvatā papañcassa gati tāvatā channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ gati. Channaṃ, āvuso, phassāyatanānaṃ asesavirāgaṇirodhā papañcaṇirodho papañcavūpasamo.*

"Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there is something left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually. Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there is nothing left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually. Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there is and is not something left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually. Friend, he who says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there neither is nor is not something left' is conceptually proliferating what should not be proliferated conceptually.

Friend, whatever is the range of the six spheres of sense-contact, that itself is the range of conceptual proliferation, and whatever is the range of conceptual proliferation, that itself is the range of the six spheres of sense-contact. By the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact, there comes to be the cessation and appeasement of conceptual proliferation."

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Translation Bodhi (2000: 540)

Friend, if one says: 'With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is something else,' one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated.

If one says: 'Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is nothing else,' one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated.

If one says: 'Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is both something else and nothing else,' one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated.

If one says: 'Friend, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact, there is neither something else nor nothing else,' one proliferates that which is not to be proliferated.

"Friend, as far as the range of the six bases for contact extends, just so far

extends the range of proliferation. As far as the range of proliferation extends, just so far extends the range of the six bases for contact. With the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases for contact there is the cessation of proliferation, the subsiding of proliferation.”

SĀ 249

The venerable Sāriputta said to the venerable Ānanda: “This is indeed baseless talk: ‘When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, is there something that remains?’ This is indeed baseless talk: ‘Is there nothing that remains?’ This is indeed baseless talk: ‘Is there something that remains and nothing that remains?’ This is indeed baseless talk: ‘Is there neither something that remains nor nothing that remains?’

If one says: ‘When the six spheres of contact have been eradicated, faded away, ceased, appeased, and disappeared, one attains Nirvāṇa and is apart from all that is baseless and false, then this is indeed what the Buddha taught.’

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The commentator gives the following explanation to the expression *atth' aññaṃ kiñci*, "is there something left?": *'tato paraṃ koci appamattako pi kilesa atthi'ti pucchati*. According to him, Venerable *Mahākoṭṭhita* is asking whether there is even a little defilement left after the cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact. But the question is obviously not about the remaining defilements, in which case even a categorical negative could have been the correct answer. The question here is about the very usage of the expressions 'is' and 'is not'.

With the cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact all four propositions of the tetralemma, based on the two standpoints 'is' and 'is not', lose their applicability. They are rejected in toto. Here the *papañca*, or "conceptual proliferation", implied, is the very discrimination between 'is' and 'is not'.

The entire world is built up on the two concepts 'is' and 'is not'. Being unaware of the *saṅkhata*, or "prepared", nature of these concepts, we are accustomed to say 'this is' as occasion demands. This recording machine before us 'is there'. So also are the things which we presume to exist. We ourselves do exist, do we not? One could say 'I am'.

Out of the two rapid processes going on within us every moment, namely arising and passing away, we are most of the time dwelling on the side of arising. The two concepts 'is' and 'is not' are structured on the six spheres of sense-contact. Not only 'is' and 'is not', but also the entire logical structure connecting these two postulates is founded on these six spheres. Here, then, we see the fistfuls of inflammable incense powder the Buddha had directed towards language and logic, setting all that ablaze.

What this discourse highlights is the fact that by the very cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact the cessation of conceptual proliferation is brought

about. With reference to speculative views, particularly to those wrong views that were put aside as unexplained points, the Buddha uses the term *ditṭhipariḷāha*, "delirium of views". *Pariḷāha* means "delirious fever".

Patients in delirium cry out for water. The worldlings, in general, are in high delirium. Even such teachers like *Pūraṇa Kassapa* and *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*, who were trying to solve these speculative problems about the world by logic, were also in delirium. Their views, based on wrong reflections, were mere hallucinations. They kept on raising such questions, because they had no insight into the nature of *saṅkhāras*, or "preparations".

The worldlings spend their whole lifetime running in search of the world's end. All that is *papañca*, conceptual proliferation. In fact, the term *papañca* is so pervasive in its gamut of meaning that it encompasses the entire world. Usually, the term is glossed over by explaining it with reference to *taṇhā*, *māna* and *ditṭhi*, bringing in craving, conceits and views as illustrations of *papañca*. But that does not amount to an explanation proper. It is only a definition in extension by giving three instances of *papañca*. To rattle off the three instances is not a fit answer to the question 'what is *papañca*'.

The primary significance of *papañca* is traceable to the linguistic medium. We have already shown how the network of grammar spreads as soon as the peg 'am' is driven down to earth, as it were. The reality in the first person in grammar beckons a second and a third person to complete the picture. In logic, too, a similar legerdemain takes place. The interminable questions of identity and difference lead the logician up the garden path.

The 'world' is precariously perched on a fictitious network of grammar and logic.

It is as a solution to all this that the Buddha came out with the extraordinary prospect of a cessation of the six spheres of sense-contact. This, then, is a level of experience realizable here and now. That is why the Buddha declared that the world is in this very fathom-long body with its perceptions and mind.

Now as to the questions about the world, we have already pointed out that there is a circularity involved. Though one cannot find an end in something of a cyclic nature, there is still a solution possible. There is only one solution, that is, to break the cycle. That is what the term *vaṭṭupaccheda* means. One can breach the cycle. The cycle cannot be discovered by travelling. It is not out there, but in this very stream of consciousness within us. We have already described it as the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form. An allusion to the breach of the vortex is found in the following verse, which we had already discussed in connection with *Nibbāna*.

*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ,  
anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,  
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī,  
tejo vāyo na gādhati.  
Ettha dīghañca rassañca,  
aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,*

*ettha nāmañca rūpañca,  
asesaṃ uparujjhati,  
viññāṇassa nirodhena,  
etth'etaṃ uparujjhati.*

"Consciousness, which is non-manifestative,  
Endless, lustrous on all sides,  
Here it is that earth and water,  
Fire and air no footing find.  
Here it is that long and short,  
Fine and coarse, pleasant, unpleasant,  
And Name-and-form are cut off without exception,  
When consciousness has surceased,  
These are held in check herein."

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Translation Walshe (1987: 179)

"Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all-luminous  
That's where earth, water, fire and air find no footing,  
There both long and short, small and great, fair and foul,  
There 'name-and-form' are wholly destroyed.  
With the cessation of consciousness this is all destroyed."

Sanskrit fragment parallel in Zhou 2008: 9, 389v7f (with corrections)

*tatredaṃ vyākaraṇaṃ bhavati jñātvā dharmān yathātathaṃ:  
vijñānyānidarśanaṃ anantaṃ sarvataḥ pṛthum taṃ pṛthivīpṛthatvena  
anabhibhūtaṃ atha pṛthivī āpaś ca tejo vāyur na gāhate, atra dīrghaṃ ca  
hrasvaṃ cāpy aṇu sthūlaṃ śubhāśubham atra nāma ca rūpaṃ cāpy aśeṣaṃ  
uparudhyate*

Chinese parallel DĀ 24

應答識無形，無量自有光。  
此滅四大滅，麤細好醜滅，  
於此名色滅，識滅餘亦滅」 (CBETA, T01, no. 1, p. 102, c17-19)

Translation Meisig (1995: 195): "This must be answered: consciousness — shapeless, extraordinary, radiating by its own — if *this* vanishes, then the four elements vanish, and coarse and subtle, nice and ugly vanish. Into *this* name and form vanish to (sic). If consciousness vanishes, the rest vanishes, too."

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Here one can see how name-and-form are cut off. *Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbaṃ pabhaṃ*, "consciousness, which is non-manifestative, infinite and lustrous on all sides". In this consciousness even the four great primaries earth, water, fire and air, do not find a footing. *Cakkavāla*, or a world-system, is supposed to be made up of these four primary elements. Even the term

*cakkavāla* implies something cyclic. The world is a product of these primary elements, but these are not there in that non-manifestative consciousness.

Such relative distinctions as long and short, subtle and gross, have no place in it. Name-and-form cease there, leaving no residue. Like an expert physician, who treats the germ of a disease and immunizes the patient, the Buddha effected a breach in the *saṃsāric* vortex by concentrating on its epicycle within this fathom-long body.

The ever recurrent process of mutual interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form forming the epicycle of the *saṃsāric* vortex was breached. With the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of consciousness. That is the dictum of the *Nalakalāpīsutta*. Out of the two bundles of reeds left standing, supporting each other, when one is drawn the other falls down. Even so, with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of consciousness. That is how the Buddha solved this problem.