

# ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA

(The Sublime Eightfold Way)

Level III - Awakening from the dream of existence



by Ven. Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Venerable Mahathera Madawela Punnaji is a Buddhist monk of the Theravada Order of Sri Lanka. After completing his studies in Western Medicine, he became fully ordained, in his thirties, under the patronage of the most venerable Maha Nayake Thera, Madihe Paññasiha, Head of the Mihiripanne Dhammarakkhita Amarapura Nikaya. He completed his monastic studies at the Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama and his meditative training at the Island Hermitage, Dodanduwa, Sri Lanka.

In 1971, venerable Punnaji was sent by his preceptor to the Washington Buddhist Vihara, the first Buddhist monastery in the US established by his preceptor. In 1973, he returned to establish a meditation centre in Padeniya, Sri Lanka. In 1977, he was invited to become the president of the Triple Gem Society of Boston, where he taught yoga and meditation to Americans and conducted research in Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy, in association with Boston and Harvard Universities. He engaged in several academic pursuits including teaching Buddhist psychology at the Adult Education Center in Boston, Massachusetts, and Buddhist Philosophy at the University of Vermont in 1980. In 1981, he was invited to be the Abbot of the Toronto Maha Vihara in Canada. In 1992, he established the West End Buddhist Monastery in Mississauga, Ontario. In 1993, he was invited by Mr. R. Premadasa, the President of Sri Lanka to establish the Mihindu Sarasaviya, a Buddhist Research Institute in

Mihintale, Sri Lanka. In 1997, he was invited to serve as Professor of Buddhism at the Fo Kuan Shan Monastic University in Taiwan.

Ven. Punnaji has made a lifelong research to discover the original teachings of the Buddha, which he has found to be different from all the modern schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, including Zen and Pure-land Buddhism. His research also made him realize that Buddhism, in its original form, was not a mere religion of faith and prayer, but a psychological technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness. His research has not been merely academic but also experiential. This has made him capable of speaking out of his own experience instead of merely repeating what he has read in books. Ven. Punnaji's interest in Western psychology has led him to the discovery of a form of Buddhist Psychotherapy, which he thinks is the best way to introduce Buddhism to the modern world.

Ven. Punnaji has played a significant role in the dissemination of Buddhism in the West and is well known to Buddhists in Canada, United States and abroad. Sought by many as a resourceful spiritual guide, Ven. Punnaji shares his time between the Buddhist centres in Canada, United States, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and other countries. At present, he resides at the Buddhist Maha Vihara, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he teaches Buddhist meditation and philosophy. The very supportive environment and the community of Sangha and devotees at Brickfields has enabled him to continue his research in to original Buddhism and publish his findings for the benefit of seekers all over the world. For further information, please visit:

<http://www.protobuddhism.com>

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***Books by the Author:***

*Awakening Meditation* (2001). Puremind Publishers, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

*Ariyamagga Bhavana, the Sublime Eightfold Way. Level I Meditation Guide.* (2010).

*Beyond the Horizon of Time – Is Reincarnation Buddhist?* (2011)

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*Ariyamagga Bhavana, the Sublime Eightfold Way, Level II – Tranquility of Mind* (2015).

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## FOREWORD

In the first two stages of our meditation, we have already explained the why and how of meditation. As a reminder let us state that the aim of our meditation is to solve the problem of existence, which has been presented to the modern world by existential philosophers by stating that out of all animals, it is the human animal that is aware of his own existence and also aware of his impending inevitable certainty of death, which brings about anxiety and fear or anguish. It was the Buddha who offered a solution to this problem by pointing out that existence is a delusion. This delusion is maintained by blind emotions that cannot think rationally. It is the thinking faculty of the human being that can solve this problem through a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking. Yet before we can do this the emotions have to be controlled first. This was what we did at the first and second stages. It is in this third and final stage that we bring about a paradigm shift. What we did in the first two stages is what is called tranquility meditation (*samatha bhāvana*). At this final stage we practice the insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), which we call *vidassanā* to distinguish it from the commonly known insight meditation.

This special *vidassanā* that we practice is the Seven Steps to Awakening (*satta bojjhanga*) from the dream of existence. This practice is the final stage in the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which is the transition from the Harmonious Attention (*sammā sati*) to the Harmonious Equilibrium (*sammā samādhi*), resulting in the full maturity of Intelligence (*paññā*) and emancipation (*vimutti*) and the imperturbable serenity of mind (NIBBĀNA).

*May all beings be well and happy!*

# INTRODUCTION

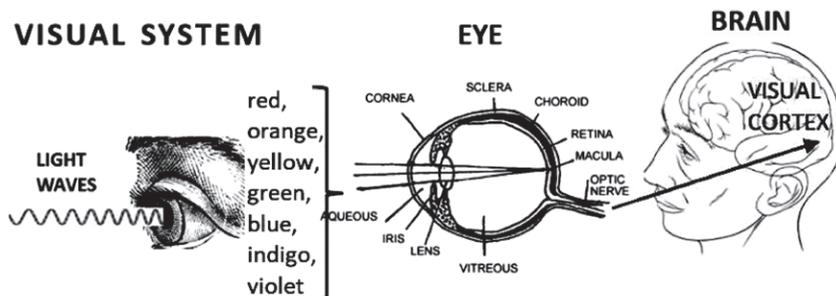
## Why and how of meditation

**M**editation at this third level is to Awaken from the dream of existence. Before we can get into a discussion of the Seven Steps to Awakening (*satta bojjhanga*), it is necessary to understand the process of perception as described by the Buddha. This is a series of antecedents that can be visualized by means of an analogy of a row of marbles, where when we tap the marble at one end the marble next to it begins to knock the adjacent marble, thus starting a movement of marbles ending in the last marble being thrown away. That is a series of antecedents moving one after the other at the same time. All modern electromagnetic energy transmissions such as radio, TV, and telephone, etc., occur in a similar way. It is such a series of antecedents that the Buddha called Concurrence of Antecedents (*Paticca Samuppāda*).

Even the process of perception occurs in a similar way according to the teachings of the Buddha. When we open our eye during the day time, we see things. That is called eye perception. Most of the time we think about what we see. It is only very rarely that we begin to consider how we see what we see. We only know that we see through our eyes. We do not know how the eye sees. The Buddha explained how we see, and modern scientists have confirmed it through their experimental research. When we open our eyes

electromagnetic waves coming from the sun or any other source of light, will enter our eyes. Our eyes work like a camera.

Just as light comes in to a camera, and touches the light sensitive screen at the back of the camera, in the same way light comes and touches the retina at the back of the eye ball. It is important to remember that light comes in the form of waves of different frequencies and there are nerve endings at the retina that can detect only one frequency of light, which produces only one colour out of seven colours namely: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. This means what we see at the beginning is only colour. The objects that we see are merely pictures that the brain constructs out of colours. Every picture that is constructed is identified by giving it a name. Therefore, what we see are mental images or pictures identified with names.



This was how the Buddha analyzed the process of perception using the following terms:

1. *Rūpa* = mental image
2. *Vedanā* = feeling
3. *Saññā* = sensation
4. *Sankhāra* = construction
5. *Viññāna* = perception.

This means what is commonly called the five aggregates really mean the five constituents of the process of perception. These same terms are used to describe the process of perception related to the other senses, such as: the eye, ear, nose, tongue and touch because this process of perception is not only related to these five senses but also to the brain, especially the cerebral cortex or neocortex, the Buddha spoke of six senses instead of five senses, in order to include the activity of the neocortex, which the Buddha called *mano*.

All this means that the process of perception begins from a state of not knowing anything, which we have called insentience (*avijjā*). This does not mean that sentience or perception can be called *vijjā*. This term *vijjā* has a meaning beyond mere perception leading to full comprehension (*pariññā*) of the Fourfold Supernormal Reality. This is why *vijjā* is something that has to grow up to full comprehension. Therefore, visual perception (*viññāna*) is only the beginning of *vijjā*. The next level of growth is six-fold perception (*salāyatana*), which grows further up to objective consciousness (*phassa*). Beyond this is the consciousness of a “self” (*bhava*) due to personalization of the subjective experience (*upādāna*) created by an emotional reaction (*tanhā*) to feelings (*vedanā*). The “self” that was created is only a notion without an identity. Therefore, an identity of “self” is created by pointing to something that exists by occupying space and time. This way, the body is identified as the “self” (*sakkāya ditthi*). Once the body becomes the “self,” that “self” has a past, present and a future. The past is birth, the future is death and the present is the process of aging of the “self.” Thus begins grief (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), physical pain (*dukkha*), mental depression (*domanassa*) and exhaustion (*upāyāsa*). Awareness of this is the awareness of Concurrence of Antecedents (*Paticca Samuppāda*), which brings about an awareness of the Fourfold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*). Resulting from this awareness a paradigm shift occurs, which is a shift from the paradigm of existence to the paradigm of impersonal experience. This brings about Awakening from the dream

of existence. That is how the Buddha became an Awakened One (Buddha).

This is why *avijjā* has been called the ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, which we call the Fourfold Supernormal Reality. Ignorance of this fact has made some critics think that we are distorting the Dhamma when we call *avijjā* insentience.

Awareness of this process of perception and conception brings about an awareness of the insecurity of the “self,” created by the emotional reaction resulting from the “self” and the “world,” in relationship. The cognitive process (*mano*) is aware of the instability of what is dependent on conditions but the affective process (*citta*) is unaware of this reality and demands stability. This becomes the problem of existence of a “self” in the “world.” The instability is the birth, aging and death, which the affective process (*citta*) is unable to stand. This is why today the world being dominated by the affective and therefore has begun to conquer nature through scientific inventions. But the insecurity of “self” has only become worse due to fear of a nuclear holocaust, global warming, and other man-made disasters.

This was why the Buddha pointed out that this problem of life, which is the conflict between the affective and the reality of life perceived by the cognitive is not to change reality but to change the affective. The affective can be changed only by the cognitive by recognizing the power of the cognitive over the affective. This is the meaning of our meditation, which is Awakening from the dream of existence.

We have heard that when the Buddha was born he walked seven steps and said, “I will not come into existence again (*natthi idhāni punnabbhavo*).” This is because he pronounced that he was going to Awaken from the dream of existence. Some people misunderstand this as saying, “I will not be reborn again.” The term *bhava* does not mean birth. The word for birth is *jāti*. The term *bhava*

means existence. Of course, the English translators have termed it becoming, which means coming in to being, which is similar to birth. The real meaning should be “being” or existence. According to the Buddha, being or existence precedes birth (*bhava paccayā jāti*). The Buddha asked the question, “what is the reason for birth?” And he answers, “existence is the reason for birth (*Mahanidāna Sutta, Digha Nikāya*).”

## **How the Buddha Awoke from the dream of existence**

The word Buddha that everyone uses means one who has Awakened. This means he has been sleeping before he Awakened. We all know that he was born as an ordinary human being like every one of us. So, to become a Buddha if he Awoke from a sleep it means that ordinary people who are called *puthujjhanas* are all asleep or not fully awake from sleep. If we examine what modern psychologists think it was Sigmund Freud who pointed out that a greater part of our mind is unconscious. It is only occasionally that we become conscious. This idea seems to agree with what the Buddha has pointed out. It is in our dream that we think we are existing. In other words, existence itself is a delusion. The Buddha is one who has Awakened from this dream of existence. Now the question arises how did the Buddha Awaken from this dream of existence. This is what follows.

## **An apology**

It is with a humble apology that we begin to explain at the outset why we use uncommon terminology in our writings to translate the orthodox Pali terms. Our aim has been to lay before the reader, in a precise manner, the exact message conveyed by the Buddha, in his well-chosen words. To do so, we have even made an indefatigable effort to understand the meaning expressed by the Buddha, in his carefully designed Pali sentences. In addition, we have

also tried to convey to the reader the exact meaning expressed by the Buddha, using the appropriate English terminology, rather than blindly repeating the words used by the early translators, which often confuses the reader.

This does not mean that we are attempting to pick holes in the tremendous work done by these great men and women. We must say that we are greatly indebted, however, to the well-known English translators such as Rhys Davids, F. L. Woodward, I. B. Horner, and many others for getting the English reading public interested in the teachings of the Awakened One, the Buddha. Yet these translations made by the early translators contained several errors. We are very thankful to these early translators, and we cannot blame them for their errors because they had to learn Pali from Sinhalese monks who had no knowledge of English. Obviously the English translators had to make use of Sinhalese translators who knew English, though their knowledge of Pali could still be questionable. This explains the difficulty these English translators would have had in learning the Pali language and even translating the words of the Buddha. This is why we must appreciate the work done by these translators despite their shortcomings. They have produced much important literature that we still keep using.

While recognizing with gratitude the great work done by these men and women, we should not forget to rectify the possible errors in the English translations. Present day readers who use these English translations very seriously want to know the genuine teachings of the Buddha as clearly as possible. Therefore, there is a great need to attend to the mistakes for their benefit.

We must also note that the success of a translation depends on the translator's ability to comprehend the meaning expressed in a Pali sentence, more than his knowledge of the grammar and words in it. In other words, we believe that a translation should be more than a mere translation of words. It should translate the meaning expressed

by the sentence. Very often the idea is lost if one translates word for word. If a translator is unable to comprehend the meaning conveyed by a sentence, the translation is unsuccessful and possibly misleading. The way an idea is expressed in one language differs from the way the same idea is expressed in another language, irrespective of the words used. The way an idea is expressed in a European language differs very much from the way the same idea is expressed in an Indian language. In other words, it is important to know the idiom of the language. This is why it is very difficult for Westerners to extract the meaning of a Pali statement, even though they had studied the grammar and the vocabulary of the Pali language.

Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese are very closely related languages. The grammar as well as the idiom in these three languages is very similar. Often the same word is used to express an idea in these languages, though in a slightly different form. This is why a translation made by a person with an adequate command of the English language as well as Pali and whose mother tongue is Sinhalese, could be more successful than a translation of a Westerner, who is proficient in the Pali language, but insufficiently familiar with its idiom.

Moreover, there is also another problem commonly encountered by translators of the teachings of the Buddha. This problem is based on the fact that these teachings are not mere stories, although some stories are found in the teachings. The teachings of the Buddha are profoundly, philosophical, psychological, and even contain concepts used in modern scientific thinking. Therefore, a person who is unfamiliar with at least the basics of these modern subjects, would find it difficult to comprehend the full meaning of some of the ideas expressed by the Buddha, even though he/she may be familiar with the Pali language or even linguistics. Without fully comprehending the meaning of a Pali statement, it would not be easy to translate it effectively.

Very often the commentaries are unable to say something conclusive regarding the meaning of deep *suttas*. So they simply give some possible interpretations and the reader finds him/herself at a loss to choose the correct one. Sometimes the commentaries go at a tangent and miss the correct interpretation. Why the commentaries are silent on some deep *suttas* is also a problem to modern day scholars (source: Venerable Katukurunde Nanananda: *Nibbāna*. Vol I, page 2).

We do not claim to be experts in these high-flown subjects, but our translator has spent almost his entire life studying some of these high level subjects, with the hope of comprehending the profound teachings of the Buddha. In addition, the translator has also tested these ideas, by putting them into practice, in order to verify the validity of the genuine teachings. An intelligent reader will be able to recognize this fact as he/she reads through the pages of this book. Therefore, it is advisable for the reader to take careful note of these facts, and not jump into hasty conclusions, or be over critical.

It would also be profitable to keep an open mind while reading, and carefully note the new meanings conveyed by the new translations, which may be quite different from the meaning conveyed by the common translations the reader is familiar with. The reader would also have an opportunity to judge for oneself whether or not the new translations give a meaning that is more enlightening than the former, and so bear witness to the validity of the translation, as well as to the Enlightenment of the Buddha.

A careful open minded examination of our explanation of the terms, *pancakkhanda* and *pancupādānakkhanda* will reveal to the intelligent reader what we mean.

For the benefit of those who are puzzled by our use of new terminology, we plan to provide a glossary containing the new words we use. We will also explain in our text why we use the new terms instead of the commonly used ones. Some of these explanations

are already present in this book where we use the new terms. The intelligent reader will be able to notice it.

## Compendium of our method

Our practice of meditation is a progressive ascending of the Supernormal Eight-fold Way (*ariya attāṅgika magga*). We use the word Supernormal instead of the common term “Normal” because the term “*Ariya*,” used by the Buddha means something above the normal (*puttujjhana*). Just as the aim of modern psychotherapy is to bring an abnormal person to a normal state the aim of the Buddha was to bring a normal person to a Supernormal state.

This transformation brings about a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking. The modern existential thinkers have drawn attention to the human predicament or **problem of existence**. They have pointed out that we are born into this world without knowing why or how. We also don't know what we should do or expect in the future. We meet pleasures we cannot always get. We meet with pains we cannot always avoid. Out of all animals it is the human being that is aware of its own existence while also being aware of its own inevitable death in the future. This brings about fear and anxiety, which is the catastrophic problem of existence that threatens all living beings both animal and plant. It is this problem and its solution that the Buddha introduced to the world more than 25 centuries ago in the form of the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*). It is the solution of this problem of existence that we intend to discuss at this point. This solution involves a paradigm shift from the paradigm of personal existence to a paradigm of impersonal experience. In other words, the Buddha pointed out that the problem was based on the notion of existence, which was a delusion. All human beings are normally asleep. They are dreaming that they exist. This dream is what is responsible the problem of

existence. Therefore, the solution is to Awaken from the dream of existence.

The Four-fold Supernormal Reality:

1. *Dukkha* (the insecurity of life)
2. *Samudaya* (the origin, which is the dream of life)
3. *Nirodha* (cessation of the insecurity of life by Awakening)
4. *Magga* (the way leading to the Awakening is the Supernormal Eightfold Way).

The insecurity of life presented by the Buddha is birth, aging, disease and death, which brings about grief, lamentation, pain, depression and exhaustion. It is interesting to point out that modern emphasis on stress and distress points to this same concern about the sufferings of life.

The origin of this insecurity of life is this dream which clashes with the reality of life. It is to stop this emotional reaction that we begin this practice of meditation. To stop this emotional reaction, we take three important steps, which are controlling behavior (*sila*), calming the mind (*samādhi*) and changing the way we think, through the paradigm shift (*paññā*). The paradigm shift is achieved through a full comprehension of the process of perception and conception. This will be explained in detail in due course.

### **Is this insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*)?**

Cultivation of the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*) is the real “**Insight Meditation**” (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) that was taught by the Buddha, in the Sutta Pitaka. However, we call this third stage, *vidassana bhāvanā* instead of *vipassanā*, in order to

distinguish it from the common kind of *vipassanā bhāvanā* that is taught all over the world today, which is based on the teachings in the Visuddhi Magga, written by the well-known author Buddhagosa. Our method is not based on the Visuddhi Magga but on the words of the Buddha as found in the Sutta Pitaka.

Our method of *vidassanā bhāvanā* is different from the common *vipassanā* in a major way. Our method is “**the development of Super-perception**” (*abhiññā*). In this method we begin to **focus our attention on the process of perception**, rather than on the **object perceived**. This is called **Apperception** (*upekkhā*). When this is done, a paradigm shift occurs between conventional truth (*sammuti sacca*) and supernormal truth (*paramatta sacca*). We call it a paradigm shift between **existential thinking** and **experiential thinking**, which results in **Super-perception** (*abhiññā*). This will be explained in more detail in due course.

In support of our use of the term *vidassanā*, instead of *vipassanā*, we quote a passage from the Metta Sutta: “*ditthiñca anupagamma sīlavā dassanena sampanno*,” which we translate as: “Having withdrawn attention from the **objects perceived**, the disciplined individual focuses attention on the **process of perception**.” This method of meditation will be elaborated as we proceed. The beginner will find it difficult to comprehend this fully at this stage. A peek into the *Mulapariyāya Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya* could be helpful in comprehension.

## A Marvellous Method

The Buddha had spoken of two ways of helping a blind man cross the road. One method is to hold his hand and guide the way. In such a case the blind man does not know where we are taking him. He must have blind faith in us. The other method is that of a surgeon who performs an operation on the blind man’s eye to make him see for

himself. This way the **blind faith** is eliminated. The Buddha declared that his method of teaching meditation is similar to the method of the surgeon. This is why the teaching of the Buddha is not based on blind faith but on clear comprehension.

This marvellous method of the Buddha has eight steps. It is called the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, commonly translated as the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the method we follow. It is called **supernormal** because the aim of the Buddha was not to get people to believe in him blindly and obey him, but his aim was to transform normal people with worries and anxieties to a supernormal level of happiness. Just as the aim of modern psychotherapy is to bring abnormal suffering to a normal level of unhappiness, the aim of the Buddha was to bring normal unhappiness to a level of supernormal happiness. How the Buddha's **supernormal aim** is realized, however, will be revealed in due course, because that is the main purpose of this book.

## Enlightenment first or last?

An important question that arises at this point is whether enlightenment arises after meditation, or whether one should be enlightened before the meditation. This seems to be a question that arose in the mind of *Acariya Buddhagosa* when beginning to write the *Visuddhimagga*. Obviously, he thought that knowledge came after meditation. This was why he saw the path as *silā-samādhī-paññā*, which he saw as starting with **control of behaviour**, followed by **concentration of mind**, and ending up in gaining **insight**.

He even quoted the words of the Buddha, in support of his position:

*Sīle patitthāya naro sapaṇṇo  
Cittān paññānca bhāvayaṇ  
Atāpi nipako bhikkhu  
So imaṇ vijataye jataṇ*

The enlightened person, being disciplined  
Develops his temperament and intellect  
This tranquil intelligent mendicant  
He does solve the riddle of life.

### The three level way is not the path

Unfortunately, *Acariya Buddhagosa* misunderstood the quotation. He seems to have ignored the statement: “**Enlightened person**” (*naro sapaṇṇo*), in the statement, “**The enlightened person being disciplined**” (*sile patitthāya naro sapaṇṇ o*). If properly translated, this means the enlightenment precedes the discipline. The fact that **enlightenment precedes discipline** is also explained in the *culla vedalla sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya*. Yet unfortunately, even there, it is incorrectly interpreted by the commentators.

All this means that the path to *Nibbāna* is not the mere **three levels** (*silā, samādhi, and paññā*). It is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*Ariya Atthāṅgika Magga*) that begins with the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā ditthi*) followed by the **Harmonious orientation** (*sammā sankappa*) before getting into the discipline of behaviour, which are: **Harmonious speech** (*sammā vācā*), **Harmonious action** (*sammā kammanta*) and **Harmonious life** (*sammā ājiva*). This fact is referred to by the Buddha in all the *Suttas* that speak of the **Way to Nibbāna**. A quick reference to the *Magga Samyutta* will confirm this fact.

This means, the control of behaviour (*silā*) has to be based on an understanding of the reason for control, as indicated by the precedence of the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā ditthi*). This means, this control of behaviour (*silā*) is not something to be done on blind faith. If it is done on blind faith, it becomes a **heteronomous morality** (*silabbata parāmāsa*), which is a **morality** subject to **external impositions**. What is needed here is **supernormal morality**

(*ariya sila*), which is an **autonomous morality** based on personal conviction and a quietist and benevolent orientation (*aparāmatṭaṇ samādhī sanvattanikaṇ*).

## The Harmonious Perspective

The first step, therefore, on this extraordinary path is the **Harmonious Perspective**, commonly translated as **Right View**, or **Right Understanding**, which points to a problem that needs to be solved. In other words, we start by **explaining** to the follower what **the problem** is, the **cause of the problem**, and the **solution of the problem**. In other words, we explain **what** should be done, **why** it should be done, and **how** it should be done. This means **we explain**, so no one can **complain**. This is not a “monkey see, monkey do” method. We speak to intelligent people who want to understand what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

## Only way to emancipation

In the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, that deals with the last days of the Buddha, we learn of a person called Subhadda who came to the Buddha and asked, “Are there emancipated spiritual men in other religious sects in the world?”

The Buddha replied, “I do not wish to talk about other religious sects. I will speak only about the views of my own religious sect. **As long as the Supernormal Eightfold Way is practiced, the world would not be devoid of emancipated spiritual men.**”

This clearly indicates that if we want to be **spiritually emancipated**, or to **solve the problem of existence**, or **be freed from the insecurity of life**, the path to be followed is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This is why the method of meditation discussed in this book is based on this **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya*

*atthāṅgika magga*), as practised and taught by the Buddha in the *Sutta Pitaka*. It is not based on the *Visuddhi Magga*, the famous book on meditation, written by the well-known author Buddhaghosha. This **Supernormal Eightfold Way** is as follows:

- (1) Harmonious Perspective (*Sammā Ditthi*)
- (2) Harmonious Orientation (*Sammā Sankappa*)
- (3) Harmonious Speech (*Sammā Vācā*)
- (4) Harmonious Action (*Sammā Kammanta*)
- (5) Harmonious Life Style (*Sammā Ajīva*)
- (6) Harmonious Exercise (*Sammā Vāyāma*)
- (7) Harmonious Attention (*Sammā Sati*)
- (8) Harmonious Equilibrium (*Sammā Samādhi*).

This Supernormal Eightfold Way has been explained in more detail in Stage 1 and 2 of this book. The reader is encouraged to read them for further clarification.

## Prevalent Errors

### Mindfulness

A mistake frequently made is that the fourfold practice of *satipatthāna* is today understood as: “the **four establishments of mindfulness**.” But the English term mindfulness refers to heedfulness or being aware, remembering something and considering it. It is **being aware of** or **recognizing** what is going on **outside**. *Satipatthāna*, however, means: **focusing** attention **within** (*sati* = attention + *upatthāna* = placing **within**). A more appropriate English term to translate the Pali term *satipatthāna* would be “**introspection**.” It is **looking within** (*sati+upatthana*) in order to **observe the experience** (*sampajañña*) that is going on quite unconsciously **within**. What is going on **within** is the **emotional reaction to circumstances going on outside**. The emotion aroused is dependent on the interpretation made by the **cognitive process**, about what is going on outside. This

was explained in detail in meditation **Stage II**, when we spoke of the **Harmonious Exercise** (*sammā vāyāma*), which is the **Fourfold Exercise** (*cattāri sammappadāni*).

In one of the Suttas the Buddha has given a very interesting analogy to explain *satipatthāna* (as introspection). Let us suppose there is a musical show and dancing before an audience. A person is given a bowl full of oil, filled to the brim, and asked to walk between the front row of the audience and the stage on which the show is performed. A ferocious man carrying a sword is following him saying, “If you drop even one drop of oil on the floor I will cut off your neck.” Imagine you are the one walking with the bowl of oil in your hand. What would you be doing? Will you be looking at the show, or looking at the bowl? No doubt your attention will be on the bowl. That is how the introspection (*satipatthāna*) has to be practiced. This will help you to understand the difference between “mindful awareness” and the “intensive introspection” that has to be carried out throughout the day, while walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, recognized the need to eliminate emotions. He saw that the emotions were responsible, not only for all neuroses and psychoses, but also for all the crimes, wars and terrorism in the world. He saw that although emotions helped some animals to preserve their lives and even propagate their species, human beings have become capable of using emotions not only to preserve their lives, but even to destroy the entire world. Yet human beings have something far better than emotions to defend themselves or gratify their wishes, which can be used more constructively, and that is the ability to think and act rationally. This was why Freud said, “In place of the *id* there shall be the *ego*,” where *id* referred to the **emotions**, and the *ego* referred to the **rational faculty**. Erich Fromm, the Neo-Freudian, quotes this passage often. Freud thought, however, that emotions could not

be rooted out, because they were inborn instincts that were built into the system. The only solution to this problem that he saw was **sublimation**, which was to direct the energy of the emotions into socially acceptable good channels. He also pointed out, however that to be **civilized** is to be **discontented**, because when civilized, the emotions are not adequately gratified.

The main concern of **Sigmund Freud** was the **conflict** between the *id* and the *ego*, but the modern day **Neo-Freudians** have begun to ignore this conflict and focus on a conflict between the *ego* and its **object**. They have begun to call the psychology of Freud an *id* **psychology**, and the modern psychology of the Neo-Freudians an *ego* **psychology** that emphasises the relation between the *ego* and its **object**. This **ego psychology** was really an idea introduced by **Alfred Adler** during the time of Freud. It appears that the Neo-Freudians have gone through a paradigm shift from the partly **experiential mode** of Sigmund Freud to the fully **existential mode** of Alfred Adler who called it **individual psychology**.

Modern **cognitive psychologists**, however, seem to have solved the problem between *ego* and the *id* by pointing out that **emotions can be eliminated**, by changing the cognitive process that interprets circumstances. They are aware that the emotion that is aroused is dependent on how the **cognitive process interprets** the external circumstances. In cognitive psychotherapy, they attempt to remove the aroused emotion, by **changing this cognitive interpretation**.

**The Buddha** recognized this fact about the relationship between the cognitive and the affective processes more than twenty-six centuries ago. In the first verse in the book of verses called *Dhammapada*, he points out that **cognition precedes all experience** (*mano pubbangamā dhammā*). He even made use of this fact to **absolutely eliminate** all self-centered emotions **within him**, and even **taught his disciples** to follow suit.

## Is *satipatthāna* the only way?

Another fundamental mistake among many who practice Buddhist meditation today is to ignore the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** altogether and instead practice *satipatthāna*. They believe that the path to emancipation is *satipatthāna*, but *satipatthāna* is only the **seventh step** in the Supernormal Eightfold Way.

This mistake, however, is due to a mistaken translation of the Pali statement in the *Satipatthāna Sutta*: “*ekāyano ayan bhikkhave maggo.*” This Pali statement is wrongly translated to mean “*satipatthāna* is the **only way** to Nirvāna (*Nibbāna*).” As a result, people have begun to practice *satipatthāna* **only**, with no reference to the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya atthāṅgika magga*).

When the mistaken practitioner is questioned, “why have you ignored the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**? The answer often given is, “the Supernormal Eightfold Way is **only a thought moment** (*cittakkhana*), which arises at the moment of enlightenment, when the *magga citta* is immediately followed by the *phala citta*.” That *magga citta* is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, and *phala citta* is **Full comprehension** (*Paññā*). In other words, the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya atthāṅgika magga*) has mistakenly become a **mere thought moment** (*cittakkhana*). The **Supernormal Eightfold Way** has also become the **final part** of the practice of *satipatthāna*, instead of the *satipatthāna* being the final part of the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This **mistaken interpretation** of the *Satipatthāna Sutta* could be the reason for the **failure** of most serious meditators today to attain *Arahatship* or the final Awakening.

## Golf as an analogy

In attempting to explain the meaning of the statement “*ekāyano ayan bhikkhave maggo,*” in relation to the Supernormal

Eightfold Way (*ariya atthāṅgika magga*) we make use of the following analogy of the **game of Golf**:

Most of us are familiar with **Golf** where players use long metal sticks called **clubs** to hit a little white ball into a small hole called **cup**, in a manicured lawn called a **green**. It is the final stage of this game to strike the small golf ball so that the ball will slowly roll over and enter the tiny hole or **cup**. This is not everything in the game, however. This is only the last portion, or end of the game.

The game begins far away from the hole. The hole cannot even be seen at the starting point. Therefore, a **flagstaff** is kept at the hole for the player to know where the hole is. It is only at the end of the game that the player sees the hole and hits the ball to go straight into the tiny hole, in one stroke.

This game can be compared to the practice of the Supernormal Eightfold Way (*ariya atthāṅgika magga*). Just as it is the final stage of this game of Golf to strike the small golf ball so that the ball will slowly roll over and enter the tiny hole or **cup**, it is the final stage of the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** to practice the satipathāna and enter Nirvana.

Just as in this game of Golf, the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** begins far away from the goal, which is **Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*). The beginning is the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā ditthi*), which makes one aware of the goal to be sought, just as the **flagstaff** does in Golf. The **Harmonious Perspective** is an **intellectual comprehension** of the **problem** that we hope to solve, which is formulated as **suffering**, its **cause**, its end, and the **way** to its end. This problem and its solution is called the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality** (*cattāri ariya saccāni*), commonly translated as the Four Noble Truths.

The **end** of our game, which is comparable to the **Golf ball slowly rolling over** and falling into the tiny hole or cup, is the completion of the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*). The

**Seven Steps to Awakening begins with Introspection** (*satipatthāna*), and ends at the fourth ecstasy with **apperception** (*upekkha*), resulting in **Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*).

**The Harmonious Equilibrium** (*sammā samādhi*) is the end of the Supernormal Eightfold Way. The step before this end is the **harmonious attention or introspection** (*satipatthāna*) that **goes straight into the Harmonious Equilibrium** by completing **The Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*). This is **similar to the last step** in the game of Golf, which is striking the small ball to go straight into the small hole or *cup*.

This means the practice of *satipatthāna* is the **final and specific shot** that goes straight to **Nirvana** (*Nibbāna*). The Pali statement: “*ekāyano ayan bhikkhave maggo ... Nibbānassa saccikiriyāya,*” means, “**Monks, this is the specific way to the single goal, which is Nibbāna**” (*eka* = single; *āyana* = going to).

### ***Satipatthāna* not the beginning**

Some people, when they begin to meditate, the first thing they do is, begin to practice *satipatthana*. This is another important fact that needs attention. *Satipatthāna* is not the **first step on the path to Nirvana** (*Nibbāna*). Everyone knows that a student who has just entered the university for studies is not ready to sit for the final examination, until he/she has completed the course of studies. In the same way, it is only by **completing the first seven steps** on the **eight-stepped path** that one is ready to focus one’s attention on the **last step**, which is *satipatthāna* practice. Of course it is possible and even necessary to practice a certain level of introspection even at the beginning of the Supernormal Eightfold Way, but that level is different from the level of practice that is necessary at this final point. This is why we have chosen to practice the path in three steps or stages as follows:

- (1) **Selective thinking** (*anussati*)  
 = Learning to eliminate the hindrances (*pahāna*)  
 = *sīla*
- (2) **Harmonious exercise** (*sammappadhāna*)  
 = Tranquility (*samatha*)  
 = *samādhi*
- (3) **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*)  
 = Insight (*vipassanā*)  
 = *paññā*

## Venerable Sariputta's statement

It is useful to quote another important passage from the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* quoted above, in order to explain the reason for our choice of the three steps we practice. The *Arahat Sariputta*, the chief disciple of the Buddha, came to the Buddha and expressed his great **appreciation** of the **Buddha** and his teaching **Dhamma**. The Buddha in answer **questioned** him as to **how he came to recognize** the value of the Buddha and the Dhamma. The **answer**, the *Arahat Sariputta* gave was that he **knew the path to Nibbāna through his own experience**. He then **summarized the path to Nibbāna** in the form of **three steps**:

- (1) Overcoming the Five Hindrances (*pañca nīvarana*) = *anussati*
- (2) Four focuses of introspective attention (*cattāri satipatthāna*) = *sammāppadhāna*
- (3) Treading the Seven Steps to Awakening (*satta bojjhanga*) = *satta bojjhanga*.

The three stages in our method of meditation are exactly the three stages described by the *Arahat Sariputta*.

- (1) **Selective thinking** (*anussati*) is the way to **overcome the five hindrances**.
- (2) The Four Harmonious Exercises (*sammāppadhāna*) is the way to complete the practice of introspective attention (*cattāri satipatthāna*).
- (3) The practice of **The Seven Steps to Awakening** begins with **introspective attention** (*satipatthāna*), and ends with **apperception** (*upekkhā*).

It is at this last stage that a **paradigm shift** occurs: Super-perception (*abhiññā*) and the individual **Awakens from the dream of existence** (*paññā*), which results in the **breaking of bonds** (*arabatta*) or **emancipation** (*vimutti*), thus entering the “**imperturbable serenity**” (*NIBBĀNA*).

## Buddha revealed the path

Another important quotation that supports our method is from the *Ānāpānasati sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where the Buddha points out:

“Monks, when **Attentiveness to Breathing** (*ānāpānasati*) is cultivated and developed, it is of great benefit and great profit. It helps get rid of the five hindrances (*pañca nīvarana*).

- (1) When attentiveness to breathing is cultivated and developed, it fulfills the **Four-fold Introspection** (*satipatthāna*).
- (2) When the **Four-fold Introspection** (*satipatthāna*) is cultivated and developed, they fulfill the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*).

- (3) When the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*) are cultivated and developed, it results in **Full Comprehension** (*paññā*) and **Emancipation** (*vimutti*).”

This passage reveals that it is when the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*bojjhanga*) are developed that the **Paradigm Shift** (*abhiññā*) occurs, which ends in **Full Comprehension** (*paññā*) and **Awakening** (*sambodhi*) and **Emancipation** (*vimutti*), resulting in the **Imperturbable Serenity** (*Nibbāna*).

If we examine the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, we find that when the **Four-fold Introspection** (*satipatthāna*) is developed:

- (1) The **Five Hindrances** are removed first
- (2) Secondly the **Five Constituents of Personality** (*pañca upādānakkhandā*) are **comprehended**
- (3) Thirdly the **Seven Steps to Awakening** are **completed**
- (4) Fourthly and finally the **Four-fold Supernormal Reality** is fully comprehended (*paññā*).

(Refer: *Dhammanupassana*)

This clearly conveys the idea that the **real Awakening** occurs only by **completing the Seven Steps to Awakening**, which is at the end of the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This leads to the **Full comprehension** (*paññā*) of the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality**, resulting in emancipation (*vimutti*) that ends in the **Imperturbable Serenity, Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*).

## Nine Great Knowledges

It is interesting to note that the *Visuddhimagga* also refers to “**Nine Great Knowledges**” (*nava maha vidhassanā ñāna*). Such knowledges are not mentioned anywhere in the *suttas*, nor even in the *Ratavinita Sutta*, on which this particular system of *vipassanā*

*bhāvāna* is based. This implies that this method in the *Visuddhimagga* could be a **later addition** historically.

It is also interesting to note that there is a **passage in the *Satipatthāna Sutta***, which is frequently repeated within the *Sutta* itself, with regard to the **Fourfold Focus of Attention** (*satipatthāna*). It is as follows:

- (A) One sees the **body** as body **subjectively**, one sees the body as body **objectively**, one sees the body as **body both subjectively and objectively**. (*Iti ajjhattam vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, ajjhatta bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati*) – (3)
- (B) One abides seeing **how the body comes into being**. One abides seeing **how the body ceases to be**. One abides seeing **how the body comes into being and ceases to be**. (*Samudaya dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati, vaya dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati, samudaya vaya dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati*) – (3)
- (C) One **regards the body is**, when one pays attention to it, yet only as a matter of knowing or paying attention. (*Atthi kāyo'ti vā panassa sati paccupatthitā hoti yāvadeva ñānāmattā ya paṭissati mattāya*) – (1)
- (D) One **abides independent**. (*anissito ca viharati*) – (1)
- (E) One **does not personalize anything in the world**. (*na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*) – (1).

Similar statements are repeated regarding the **feelings** (*vedanā*), **mood** (*citta*), and **concepts** (*dhamma*). This adds up to nine levels of insight.

This seems to be **nine stages of maturity of insight** that one has to go through as one progresses in the process of **Awakening**. This

could probably be the real “**Nine Great Knowledges**” (*nava maha vidassanā nāna*), which are referred to in the *Visuddhi Magga* but not mentioned in any Sutta other than the *Satipatthāna Sutta*. The nine great knowledge’s mentioned in the *Visuddhi Magga*, however, are not found anywhere in the *Suttas* or *Vinaya*.

## Seeing things as they are

A statement we often come across in writings on Buddhism is “**seeing things as they are**,” which is supposed to be a quotation from the Buddha. It is supposed to be a translation of the Pali statement, “*yathabbhūtam pajānāti*.” Our translation of this statement, however, is: **the understanding of “how things come to be or how things come into existence.”** These are two ways of comprehending the same statement. One is based on **existential** thinking and the other on **experiential** thinking. The common interpretation is existential and our interpretation is **experiential**.

We may compare this to another well-known statement, connected with a person called **Bahiya Dharuciriya**. This statement: “*ditthe ditthamattam bhavissati*” is often translated as, **in the seen there is only the seeing**, which is commonly understood as “**looking at something**, without **thinking about it**.” This interpretation, however, makes it look like, “guarding the senses” (*indriya-saṅvara*), which states, “on seeing a form with the eye, one does not pay attention to its appearance, nor its associations” (*chakkunā rupan divvā na nimittaggāhi, na byanjanaggāhi*).

Our interpretation, however, is: “**focusing attention on the process of seeing** instead of looking at **the object that is seen**.” This means, becoming aware of the **process of perception**, rather than the **object perceived**. This change in perception is what we call **apperception**.

When one focuses attention on the **object** perceived, the **experience of perception** is broken up into: a **subjective** and an **objective**. The **subjective process of perception** is personalized as “mine” or “myself.” The **object perceived** is alienated as an “**external object**.” This brings about an “**emotional relationship**” between the **subject** and the **object**, which ends up in: **grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion**. The sufferer may not always notice this experience of **suffering**, but others often do. The sufferer often considers this suffering to be an enjoyment. For example: a couple in love is always suffering. They are happy when they are together. The moment they separate they are unhappy. Others can see this, but the couple never sees it. Instead, they think they are enjoying. This experience of the lovers is similar to the experience of the infant with the mother. Romantic love is a rehearsal of the experience of childhood between mother and child.

It is important to note that the **Seven Steps to Awakening** begin with **introspection** (*satipatthāna*) and ends with **apperception** (*upekkhā*). This term *upekkhā* is generally translated as “**equanimity**,” but the more precise translation is “**apperception**.” The reason for this is that the term *upekkhā* originates from *upa* + *ikkhati* (*upa* = inside + *ikkhati* = seeing). This means, “**seeing the inside**.” This we understand as **looking at the process** of perception, **instead** of looking at the **object** perceived. To **perceive** is to see the **object**, and to **apperceive** is to see the **process** of perception. So instead of **perceiving**, we **apperceive**. The *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* supports this idea, when it says: “The emancipated individual, and even the Buddha super-perceives a solid (*pathavin pathavito abhijānāti*). It is because the emancipated individual and Buddha **super-perceives** (*abhijānāti*) that they do not conclude that **the solid exists** (*pathavito na maññati*).

This super-perception involves a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking. **Apperception** is focusing attention on the experience, instead of the object perceived,

which brings about the **paradigm shift** from “existential thinking” to “experiential thinking,” which is called Super-perception (*abhiññā*). Existential thinking is aware of a subject that exists and an object that exists. With this existence comes an emotional relationship between the subject and the object. **Experiential thinking** looks only at the process of perception that creates the subject and the object, and therefore sees no real existing subject or object. When there is no real subject or object, there is **no emotional relationship**, and therefore there is **no suffering** experienced. One is then **absent in the world of emotional existence**, and therefore **one does not really exist**, even though the body is seen to exist. If one does not emotionally exist, how can there be sorrow or death? This is the **Awakening from the dream of existence** (*sammā sambodhi*). This was how Bahiya Dharuciriya became an “emancipator” or a “Bond Breaker” (*Arahat*) immediately after listening to the Buddha. This is explained further in our discussion of the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, later in this book.

# STAGE III

## MEDITATION

### *Seven Steps to Awakening*

# CHAPTER I

## Cultivation of the Seven Steps to Awakening (*Satta Bojjhanga*)

**H**aving explained the WHY and the HOW of the third, the advanced, and the final level, in our system and gone through the first and second levels of meditation, we now get on to a discussion of the WHAT of the system. As we said earlier, what we do at the third level of meditation practice is the cultivation of the **Seven Steps to Awakening**, which ends up in **Awakening from the Dream of Existence**.

These **Seven Steps to Awakening** are as follows:

- (1) Systematic Introspection – (*Satipatthāna*)
- (2) Investigation of the Cognitive Experience – (*Dhammavicaya*)
- (3) Recognition of the Strength of the Cognitive over Affective – (*Viriya*)
- (4) Cognitive Satisfaction – (*Pīti*)
- (5) Physical Relaxation – (*Passaddhi*)
- (6) Affective Equilibrium – (*Samādhi*)
- (7) Cognitive Apperception – (*Upekkhā*).

Systematic Introspection ( <i>sati</i> )	Investigation of cognition ( <i>dhamma vicaya</i> )	Cognitive Strength ( <i>virīya</i> )	Cognitive satisfaction ( <i>pīti</i> )	Physical relaxation ( <i>passaddhi</i> )	Affective equilibrium ( <i>samādhi</i> )	Cognitive apperception ( <i>upekkhā</i> )
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## 1) Systematic Introspection (*Satipatthāna*)

**Systematic Introspection** (*satipatthāna*) is the beginning of the third level of meditation. It is only a continuation of the second level of meditation. It cannot be practiced properly without completing the first and second stages of meditation. In other words, these three stages of meditation gradually flow from one to the other, because they are three parts of the same Supernormal Eightfold Way. They are not separate entities.

This means the practice at the third stage comes after the practice at the second stage, which was **Harmonious Exercise** (*sammā vāyama*), and which consisted of four parts as follows:

- (1) Prevention (*Saṅvara*)
- (2) Elimination (*Pahāna*)
- (3) Cultivation (*Bhāvanā*)
- (4) Maintenance (*Anurakkhana*).

The third stage in this fourfold practice, which is the practice of **Cultivation** (*bhāvanā*), is **Systematic Introspection** (*satipatthāna*). Without going through the first two stages, **prevention** and **elimination**, it is not possible to get into the third stage, **cultivation**.

The first two stages in detail are:

- (1) **Prevention:** Withdrawing attention from perceptual images (*indriya saṅvara*),
- (2) **Elimination:** Withdrawing attention from memory images, and images about the future (*pahāna*).

These first two procedures in the fourfold practice consist of withdrawing attention from the external surroundings. The third and the fourth procedures are Systematic Introspection (*satipatthāna*) and maintenance (*anurakkhana*). In these procedures the attention is focussed, not on the objects perceived, but on the emotional reaction to those objects, which go on within, quite unconsciously.

This procedure of consciously focusing on the unconscious reactions to circumstances, stops the unconscious emotional reactions, because the unconscious reactions cannot continue consciously. They can continue only unconsciously. This is somewhat similar to the psychoanalytic procedure of Sigmund Freud, which is to become conscious of the unconscious.

In the *Satipatthāna* Sutta the Buddha points out how the introspection (*satipatthāna*) should be practiced. Normally people focus their attention on external surroundings, which means: on what they see, hear, smell, taste or touch. In **Systematic Introspection** (*satipatthāna*), “The attention that is normally focused on external surroundings, is withdrawn from the surroundings and focused within” (*parimukhaṃ satīṇ upatthapetvā*). In other words, it is only by withdrawing attention from the objective surroundings that one can focus attention subjectively inwards.

In this Systematic Introspection (*satipatthāna*) one becomes aware of one’s emotional reaction to external surroundings in the present, as well as emotional reactions to memories of the past, and to imaginations about the future. When the **attention is focused within** in this way, one begins to observe one’s reaction to circumstances **in four ways**, as mentioned in the *Satipatthāna* Sutta:

- (1) *Kāyānupassanā* – Observing the physical manifestation of the reaction in the body, as movements or tensions in the body.
- (2) *Vedanānupassanā* – Observing the manifestation as feelings in the body: pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
- (3) *Cittānupassanā* – Observing the manifestation in the form of emotional excitements, or calmness of temperament.
- (4) *Dhammānupassana* – Observing the manifestation in the form of thoughts in the mind, which are interpretations of circumstances past, present, and future.

This means, the emotional reaction is observed as two physical manifestations and two mental manifestations. As one becomes more and more aware of these reactions, these reactions begin to stop, because the unconscious process cannot go on when it has become conscious. The consequence of this is relaxation of the body and calmness of the temperament. This means, emotional disturbances disappear, and one begins to enter a state of mental tranquility and physical relaxation. In other words, one enters a state of mental and physical equilibrium (*samādhi*).

To achieve this state of mental equilibrium, however, it is **essential** to maintain the Systematic Introspection **throughout the day**, without interruption, **while walking, standing, sitting, or even lying down**.

This Systematic Introspection when properly practiced, one enters into the **second step** to Awakening.

## 2) Investigation of the cognitive experience

### *(Dhammavicaya)*

This second step (*dhammavicaya*) is to **closely examine** the experience within, to understand how it occurs. By doing so one begins to realize that the emotional reaction was started by the rational interpretation of the external circumstance. In other words, one begins to understand that it was the **interpretation of circumstances**, by the cognitive process, that **aroused the emotions**, which made one react emotionally to the circumstances (*mano pubbangama dhammā*).

This important fact is recognized by the Cognitive psychologists today, and used in Cognitive Psychotherapy to gain control over emotions. Sigmund Freud, who recognized the need to eliminate emotions was unable to do so fully because he thought that emotions were instincts that cannot be eliminated. He could

only sublimate the emotions and repent that to be civilized is to be discontented.

The cognitive psychologists have been successful in handling the problem to some extent, but they have not recognized the value of eliminating self-centered emotions all together. It was the Buddha, more than twenty-five centuries earlier, who not only recognized the importance of eliminating emotions, but made use of the cognitive process to the fullest extent, when he eradicated all self-centered emotions without leaving even a trace of it, and so became a Buddha who Awakened from the dream of existence.

In the well-known Buddhist book of verses called the *Dhammapada* where the first verse points out clearly that the cognitive process precedes the affective and therefore it is possible to eliminate emotions by right thinking:

**Cognition precedes all experience.**

It **predominates** and even creates them

With incorrect thought if one speaks or acts

Pain will follow, as the carriage the drawing animal

*Mano pubbangamā dhammā,*

*Mano setthā, manomayā*

*Manasāce padutthēna bhāsativā karotivā*

*Tato nam dukkhamanvēti, Cakkhanva vahato padam*

-- Buddha

The Buddha states further in the Anguttara Nikaya:

“The temper oh disciples, is essentially pure; it is polluted only by foreign pollutants. Unknown is this fact to the ignorant worldling. Therefore, for them there is no purity of mind. I declare” (*Ang.I.6.1*).

*“Pabassaramidaṃ bhikkave cittaṃ. Tanca ko āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkilithaṃ. Tan assutavā putujjano yatābhutaṃ nappajānāti. Tasmā assutavato putujjanassa cittabhāvanā nattiti vadāmiti.”*

It was Hans Selye in the modern era that drew attention to the need to learn to stop emotions from getting aroused. He called it **stress management**. Emotions have even obstructed world peace, which everyone in the world is yearning for. It is the cause of all the crimes, wars and terrorism in the world. Emotion is also the root cause of all mental sicknesses as Freud pointed out. The **problem of life** which the Buddha referred to, which is also recognized by modern existential philosophers, is also based on emotions. Biologists value emotions only for the reason that it helps animals save their lives and propagate their species. If one recognizes the risks involved in the pursuit of sensual pleasure? The need to gain control over emotions becomes crucial.

If **interpretation of circumstances** is at the base of all emotional upheavals, it is important to realize that most of our interpretations are conditioned by our past experiences in childhood. Some interpretations are influenced by the culture we are born into, while others are conditioned by the nature of the influences we grew up with. Whatever circumstances we face today are interpreted through past conditionings. Our present worries, feelings of inadequacy, frustrations, fears and fantasies about the future are therefore only the result of concepts based on past experiences. To take these concepts seriously is to create further emotional upsets (*dukkha*).

It is interesting to note that the *Madhupindika Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya* provides an explanation of how the cognitive process recognizes objects through categorization of past experiences (*tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papancasaññā sankhāsamudācaranti atitānāgata paccuppaññesu cakkhuviññeyyesu rupesu*). This recognition of objects

by placing them in categories makes an individual react to past, present, and future images.

When this is fully understood by a stable mind, it helps one realize that most interpretations are not necessarily facts. When this is realized, the strength of the interpretation is diminished. Then even the validity of the interpretation is doubted, resulting in the total elimination of the wrong interpretations as well as the self-centered emotions that come with it.

It is important to understand that a desire, hatred, or fear arises only because of the way one interprets one's circumstances. If one considers something to be pleasant, then a desire arises. To overcome such a desire, one can reflect on its unpleasantness. For example, if we hate taking a bitter medicine, we can think of its health giving properties. By thinking of its pleasantness in this way, we can tolerate the distaste. Similarly, to overcome one's attachment to things of the world, the Buddha taught the reflection on the threefold nature of all things (*tilakkhana*): instability (*anicca*), painfulness (*dukkha*), and impersonality (*anatta*). Some critics call this pessimism without knowing its therapeutic value.

It is important to note that this **examination of the cognitive interpretation** occurred as a result of the practice of Systematic Introspection. It helped one realize that the emotions were aroused only because of the way the circumstances were interpreted. By changing the interpretation, it was possible to eliminate the emotional arousal.

### 3) Strength of the Cognitive over the Affective (*Viriya*)

The realization that the cognitive process (*mano*) precedes the affective process (*citta*) gives strength to the cognitive process to overcome the emotions. The cognitive process has only to change the interpretation of circumstances and the emotional excitement stops.

Self-centered emotions have been useful for the lower animals for the preservation of life, but they can also be very destructive, especially in the case of the human being who can use his intelligence to make it severely destructive.

Yet the human being with his advanced cognitive process has a power beyond the lower animals in being able to delay the emotional reaction to get sufficient time to decide the best response to make in a given situation and act accordingly. In other words, he can rationally respond to a situation, instead of reacting emotionally. This ability to respond instead of react is popularly called will power. This rational response is achieved, however, through Systematic Introspection (*satipatthāna*)

This awareness of the need to stop the emotions being aroused, and the power the human being has to stop the emotional arousal, gives strength to the cognitive process.

This strength of the cognitive process arose because the cognitive process examined the experience within, and the examination was done because introspection was practiced. Thus systematic introspection flowed into examination of experience, which flowed into awakening the strength of the cognitive process.

#### 4) Cognitive satisfaction (*Pīti*)

When the thinking cognitive process (*mano*) begins to recognize this need to control the emotions and the power it has to do so, it experiences a degree of satisfaction, and confidence.

When the cognitive process is able to gain control over the blind but powerful affective process, the cognitive process experiences freedom from guilt and remorse, and therefore experiences a sense of satisfaction and delight (*pīti*). This however, is not an emotional excitement, but a calm tranquil sense of repose or serenity. It is

a cognitive experience of contentment rather than an affective experience of rapture.

## 5) Relaxation of the Body (*Passaddhi*)

With the experience of this satisfaction and delight the muscles in the body relax (*pīti manassa kā yaṇ passambhati*). Thus is the gradual flow of events as one treads through the seven steps to awakening. When the body is relaxed the body feels comfortable (*passaddha kayo sukhaṇ vediyati*). With this relaxation of body and physical comfort the mind becomes free of all five hindrances (*pañca nīvarana*) that disturb the mind. This too is the natural flow of events in the process of awakening.

## 6) Tranquility of Temperament (*Samādhi*)

It is important to understand at this point that we started with a conflict between our blind emotions (*citta*) and the reality observed by the rational (*mano*). The irrational *citta* was playing havoc and the rational *mano* was attempting to gain control over the difficult *citta*.

Now the *mano* has recognized its power over the *citta* and has gained control over the *citta*. This way, the conflict is resolved. The cognitive dissonance has been turned into a cognitive consonance. Hence the affective equilibrium. With this unification of mind came the arrival of the feeling of satisfaction and comfort, and the disappearance of the five hindrances, and the affective process enters the state of equilibrium (*sukhino cittaṇ samādhīyati*) called the first ecstasy (*patamajjhāna*). In other words, the cognitive and the affective processes that were in conflict, now enters a state of unity, as the mind enters the state of equilibrium.

When the mind is free of the five hindrances, the five constituents of ecstasy are experienced (*jhānānga*): Conceptual thinking in two parts: 1) inquiry (*vitakka*), and 2) inference (*vicāra*), 3) cognitive satisfaction (*pīti*), 4) Physical comfort (*sukha*) due to relaxation of the body, and 5) the unity of mind (*ekaggatā*). The mind becomes unified when the conflict between the cognitive and affective is resolved (absence of cognitive dissonance or *vicikicca*). This means, one has entered the **first ecstasy** (*patamajjhāna*). This is the sixth step in the seven stepped process of awakening.

While in the emotional world, there was a split between the cognitive and the affective, when the cognitive split into two: one taking the side of the affective and the other taking the side of the cognitive, thus creating a cognitive dissonance. This unity between the cognitive and the affective occurs when the split parts of the cognitive unites and thus unites the cognitive and the affective. This union between the cognitive and the affective is called cognitive consonance.

This unity between the cognitive and the affective occurred because of the Systematic Introspection (*satipatthāna*). When this was done, the activity of the cognitive process in arousing the emotions was discovered (*dhamma vicaya*). This discovery gave strength to the cognitive process (*virīya*), resulting in the joy of liberation from emotional disturbance (*pīti*), which lead to the relaxation of body (*passadda kāyo*) and the feeling of comfort (*sukha*), which ended up in the union between the affective and the cognitive (*ekaggatā*) resulting in the perfect equilibrium (*samādhi*).

Cognitive joy flows into Physical relaxation, which flows into tranquility of the affective process, resulting in the first ecstasy. Thus was the natural flow of events in the Seven Stepped Process of Awakening (*satta bojjhanga*).

## 7) Apperception (*Upekkhā*)

Once in the first ecstasy, the process gradually flows into the second, the third, and the fourth ecstasy. This process called ecstasy is a gradual withdrawal of attention from the lower level of experience. So, at the fourth ecstasy the unified mind enters an interesting transformation. It completely withdraws attention from the object perceived and becomes focused inwards on the process of perception (*upekkhā-ekaggatā*).

The term “*upekkhā*,” which is commonly translated incorrectly as “equanimity” is a combination of two roots: “*upa* + *ikkhati*” (*upa*=within; *ikkhati*=seeing). It means, “seeing what is within.”

Then the question arises, “What is seeing within?” The answer is that the process of perception consists of two parts: 1) the object perceived, and 2) the process of perception. At the fourth ecstasy, the mind withdraws attention from the object perceived, and focuses attention on the process of perception. This is “seeing within” = *upekkha*. The English term we use to translate *upekkha* is **apperception**, which is to look at the process of perception.

It is this process of perception that the Buddha analysed into five parts that are commonly translated as the “five aggregates.” We translate these five parts of the process of perception as the “**five constituents of the process of perception.**” These constituents are usually personalized to form the personality, and therefore they are called “**the five personalized constituents of perception**” or “**the five constituents of personality**” (*panca upādānakkhandā*). Due to personalization, the five constituents of perception become the five constituents of personality. Here again we use the term “**personalization**” to translate the Pali term *upādāna* because this term does not mean mere **grasping** or **clinging**, as it is commonly understood. It is by **personalizing the constituents of perception “as mine”** that the personality comes into being (*etan mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attāti*).

When the mind is focused on the process of perception through apperception, a paradigm shift occurs. One begins to realize that **the entire world and things in it are merely products of perception or phenomena**, and not a real existing noumena. **Even what we call our “self” is such a phenomenon**. Therefore, a paradigm shift occurs from the sense of subjective and objective existence, to a sense of impersonal experience, dependent on the necessary natural conditions. This is the **Awakening from the dream of existence** (*sammā sambodhi*).

The Seven Steps to Awakening began with introspection (*satipatthāna*) and ended in apperception (*upekkhā*). This resulted in a paradigm shift from existence to experience (*abhiñña*). As we mentioned earlier, introspection (*satipatthāna*) is **looking** within, and apperception (*upekkhā*) is **seeing** what is within. What is within is not the **object perceived** but the **process of perception**. This **focus of attention on the process of perception** instead of the object perceived is what we called **apperception**. It is a shift from the **object perceived**, to the **process of perception**. It is a withdrawal of attention from the object, and focusing on the process of perception. This brings about the paradigm shift from an **awareness of existence** to an **awareness of experience**.

This **paradigm shift** though it was started by **apperception** it ends in **Super-perception** (*abhiñña*). This paradigm shift is also known as the **Liberation from Existence** (*bhava nirodha*). It is **Awakening from the Dream of Existence** (*sammā sambodhi*). The experience of this **paradigm shift** makes one a spiritually emancipated **Breaker of Bonds** (*Arahat*).

### **The paradigm shift (*nirodha samāpatti*)**

To focus on the **object perceived** is to become aware of the object perceived as **existing**, while the **subject that perceives** the object

is also seen to exist. The subject is normally personalized as “mine,” thus creating a sense of “I” or “self” (*etan mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attati*). This way of thinking is what we call **existential thinking**.

Instead of **thinking existentially** this way, if one focuses attention on the **process of perception** and not on the object perceived, then one sees that it is the process of perception that **creates the object** as well as the **subject**. Then the existence of the subject and the object is seen as an **appearance** and **not a reality**. It is then an illusion or a **delusion**; an **illusion** being a **perceptual fallacy**, while a **delusion** is a **conceptual fallacy**. This kind of thinking where the **focus is on the experience of perception**, rather than the subject or object, is called **experiential thinking**.

This is why the Buddha points out in the *Mulapariyaya Sutta*, that the **normal putujjana** perceives a solid as a solid and **concludes** there is a **solid**. The emancipated *Arabat Super-perceives* (*abhijanati*) a solid and **does not conclude** that a solid exists. This is the difference between **perception** and **Super-perception**, which is based on **apperception**.

This change from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking** is the **relieving paradigm shift** (*nirodha samāpatti*). It means one is relieved from the **sense of existence** (*bhava*) and therefore **existence disappears** and along with it disappears **death**. When **existence** is no more, **birth, aging and death** are no more. This is the **end of all grief, lamentation, pain, distress and exhaustion**. It is in this way that the **great mass of suffering** comes to an end (*eva metassa kevalassa dukkhakkandassa nirodho hoti*).

This was why the Buddha said: “**When the mind enters equilibrium Dhamma appears** (*samāhite citte dhammaṃ patubhāvo*), and farther he said, “**When the mind enters equilibrium, one understands how things come to be**” (*samāhite citte yatabhutaṃ pajanāthi*). It is interesting to compare this statement with the biblical statement, “Be still and know ‘I am God.’”

To clarify this point further it is helpful to make use of an **analogy**. Suppose we keep a **bird** in front of a **mirror**, the bird begins to peck at the figure in the mirror, backed by the assumption that the figure in the mirror is another bird behind the mirror. If, on the other hand, we place a **human face** in front of the **mirror**, the human being knows that the figure in the mirror is a reflection of one's own face. Here the human being is **aware of the process**, by which the image in the mirror is seen, and therefore knows that there is no human being behind the mirror. In the same way, when one is aware of the process of perception one knows that **what is seen** is only **product of the process of perception** and not a real existing thing out there.

This is why the emancipated *Arahat* is aware of the process by which the object is seen, and therefore does not come to the conclusion that the object really exists. This is what we called **Super-perception** (*abhiññā*), as distinct from the **ordinary perception** of the normal human being. This explains the meaning of the two statements:

1. **You are that** (*thath thvam asi*)
2. **Arrived at that** (*thath āgatha*).

When an object is perceived normally, the object is seen to exist outside, while the process of perception is seen to exist inside. This means, both subject and object are seen as existing. This way of thinking is **existential thinking**, where the main concern is about the fact of **existence**: or “that it exists.” (*pathavito maññati*).

In **existential philosophy** they distinguish between existence and essence.

1. **Existence** = that it is.
2. **Essence** = what it is.

The Buddha happened to express this in his own words

1. **Existence** = *pathavito maññati*
2. **Essence** = *pathaviyā maññati*

Buddha also pointed out that we also **personalize** the subjective as “mine” (*pathaviṇṇ meti maññati*) and **alienate** the objective as “not mine.” What is **personalized** becomes the **personality** or “self” that is supposed to exist inside. What is alienated becomes a part of the “world,” that exists outside.

This **personalization** of the subjective is what is called *upādāna*. This is why we do not translate the term *upādāna* as “grasping” or “clinging.” (*upa*=inside; *ādāna*=taking). To take inside is to personalize as “mine.”

It is interesting to note that when we think of ourselves, we are thinking of an image in our mind, not a real existing object that can be seen. This image can even change in different circumstances. When someone takes a picture of me and shows it to me, I begin to think it cannot be my real “self,” because it is different from the picture I have in my mind. This proves that **what I call my “self” is only a picture in my mind** that even changes from time to time, and a series of sensations in my body that also changes from time to time. In other words, what I call my “self” is only a collection of cinematographic pictures and sensations stored in my memory, which I can replay when ever I need. This was why the Buddha called it **the fivefold mass of personalized constituents of perception that form a personality** (*pañcā upādānak khandā*).

Having created a self this way we are bringing about a paradigm of **relationships** between the “self” that exists, and the “objects” perceived as existing. The relationship is filled with **emotions** in the form of likes and dislikes. It becomes a **paradigm of emotional existence**. We normally live in this paradigm, which is a mass of suffering. It is this paradigm that the Buddha called **Being** (*bhava*). This paradigm of **being** is the **paradigm of insecurity and suffering** (*dukkha*) because it is filled with **emotional disturbances**.

When we then begin to become **aware of the process of perception**, we begin to realize that suffering is involved with this paradigm or way of thinking and we begin to think in a different way. The **object perceived** is only a **creation of the process of perception**. When we focus our attention on the process of perception we are aware that what we see is not a real object outside but a mental image, which is inside our head. In other words, both subject and object are not seen as existing as in existential thinking. What ever is seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched, is only a sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch and the **objects** are understood to be only a **product** constructed by the process of perception.

This means, the object perceived is not a **reality** but an **illusion** or **delusion**. An illusion is a **perceptual fallacy**, and a delusion is a **conceptual fallacy**. The object perceived is seen as a **mental image** (*rupa*), like a picture taken by a camera. The mental image is formed by the process of **construction** (*sankhāra*) the colours seen are the sensations (*saññā*), which are felt as **pleasant** or **unpleasant** (*vedanā*). The images are **identified** (*viññāna*) as **objects** (*rupa*) by giving them **names** (*nāma*).

This transformation of thinking is the **paradigm shift** from **existential** thinking to **experiential** thinking. Then there is **neither subject nor object** nor **emotional relationship** with its **insecurity** and **suffering**. There is only the process of perception, tranquility and **peace of mind**. This is how one **Awakens from the dream of existence**. In so doing all **suffering comes to an end**.

## CHAPTER II

### Awakening from the Dream of Existence (*Anuttaraṇ Sammā Sambodhiṇ*)

#### A gradual reduction of experience

**T**he dream of existence is a mental process. The mental process creates the dream. Therefore, to **Awaken** is to **become aware of this mental process**. To become aware of the mental process we must **stand out** of the mental process. This standing out is a **gradual reduction of experience**.

We have already pointed out that the meaning of the term “ecstasy,” as we use it, means **standing out** (*ec* = out; *stasy* = standing). It is through a process of standing out that a gradual **reduction of experience** takes place. To reduce experience is to **stop the mental activity**.

In other words, what we begin to do is a **gradual stopping** of mental activity. When one enters the first ecstasy, with the **elimination of the five hindrances**, and the appearance of the **five Constituents of Ecstasy** (*jhānaṅga*), one has come out of the “**world of emotional activity**” (*kāma loka*) and entered a state of tranquility, which is the first ecstasy (*pathamaṇ jhānaṇ*) or standing out, or reduction of experience, or stopping of mental activity.

From there on, one can proceed further, by a gradual reduction of experience, into the other levels of ecstasy. Progress on the path depends on a gradual abandoning or standing out of the former level. This means, what is called *samādhi* is a **gradual reduction of**

**experience.** It is like climbing a flight of steps, where at every step forward, we abandon the former step. The first four ecstasies, or standing out, is a gradual reduction of the affective experience.

Following is an enumeration of this gradual reduction of the constituents of experience, as one passes through the four ecstasies:

- (1) First ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes: – conceptual inference (*vitakka*), inquiry (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), comfort (*sukha*), stillness (*ekaggatā*)
- (2) Second ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes: – joy, comfort, and stillness (*ekaggatā*)
- (3) Third ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes: – comfort, stillness (*ekaggatā*)
- (4) Fourth ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes: – stillness, apperception (*upekkhā ekaggatā*) – (breathing stops but respiration continues).

## **Apperception is non-perception**

It is important to understand that at the fourth ecstasy, a change in the focus occurs: Instead of the focus being directed towards **the object perceived**, the focus is directed towards **the process of perception**. This change of focus is called **apperception**, which means becoming aware of the **process of perception**, instead of the **object perceived**. It is at this point that one becomes aware of the **five constituents of the process of perception**, which are today translated as the “**five aggregates**.” These **constituents of the process of perception** (*pancakkhanda*) when **personalized** (*upadāna*) become the **personality** or “**self**.” In other words, **personalization** produces the **personality** or **self**.

It is at this stage that a distinction is made between the **self** and the **not self**. The subjective process is personalized as “**mine**”; and

the objective process is alienated as “**not mine**”. In other words, what is **personalized** (*upadāna*) turns it into the **personality** (*upadāna paccayā bhavo*).” What is alienated becomes the external object. It is the external object that we may fall in love with or begin to hate. To fall in love is to want to make the “**not mine**” object “**mine**.”

## Reduction of the cognitive experience

If one **continues** the reduction of experience beyond this point, the **gradual reduction** of the **cognitive experience** begins. This reduction of the cognitive experience is also a case of **letting go of the former** level of cognition. Each progressive level is a letting go, or an absence of the former level of experience, or a stopping of mental activity. This **cognitive reduction** also takes four steps as follows:

- (1) **The realm of infinite space** (*akāsanantāyatana*) – the objects perceived (*rūpa*) are absent.
- (2) **The realm of infinite perception** (*viññānancayatana*) – attention is focused on the process of perception.
- (3) **The realm of nothing** (*akincāññāyatana*) – the attention is withdrawn from the process of perception and focused on nothing.

**The realm of neither sensation nor no sensation** (*neva saññā nāsaññāyatana*) – the attention is withdrawn even from the awareness of nothing. Therefore, the attention is not focused on any sensation, though not remaining totally unconscious. This is being at the threshold of consciousness.

The above four levels of experience are levels of cognitive reduction. The two teachers of the *Bodhisatta*, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Rama Putta, had both reached only the realm of nothing (*akincāññāyatana*). It was Uddaka Rama, the teacher of the second

teacher, who had entered the realm of **neither sensation nor no sensation** (*neva saññā na asaññāyatana*). The *Bodhisatta* learned from the second teacher how to reach that state and did reach that state himself. Yet he wanted to go further but there was no one to teach him how.

This was why the *Bodhisatta* decided to leave Uddaka Rama Putta and join the five ascetics and practice asceticism. He practiced asceticism to the ultimate level. He fasted till he became almost a skeleton, and even tried to stop breathing until he fell unconscious and people thought he was dead.

## Success through self-reliance

He woke up, however, and it was then that he began to think: “All these days I have been trying to learn from others, and do what other people do. I had ignored my own qualifications (*paramitā*) that I had earned, through the infinite sacrifices I had made, during my journey through the endless **chain of births and deaths** (*saṃsāra*). Thinking this way, he recalled how he entered the **first ecstasy** (*jhāna*) as a child, not by learning from another but by an inborn tendency. Then he thought: “Now I will begin to follow my **natural inclination to let go of everything**.” So he let go of all his lust, hate, and delusions including the five hindrances, and automatically entered the first ecstasy (*jhāna*), then by gradually letting go in degrees he entered the second ecstasy by excluding inquiry and inference, then the third, then the fourth, then the realm of infinite space, the realm of infinite perception, the realm of nothingness, the realm of neither sensation nor no sensation, and then **the cessation of all sensation and feeling**.

This last stage called **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*) was the **ultimate level** in the reduction of the cognitive experience. There was no level further than this. This is the **complete disappearance** of the cognitive experience. It

is the absence of all experience. This level is the level of **absolute unconsciousness** (*avijjā*). At this level the **physical activity of metabolism** (*āyu sankhāra*) is present, along with the **temperature of the body** (*ushna*), but **no mental activity of any kind** is present. It is **similar** to the state called **hibernation** that is found in the lives of some animals like the bear. These animals remain in a dormant state, alive but unconscious, during the cold winter, but wake up from that state during the spring.

This state, which is called the **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*), which is **similar to the state called hibernation**, is often **misunderstood as the experience of Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*). This is a **common misunderstanding**. The real meaning of the **experience of Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*) will be explained in due course.

## The mind is understood

This stopping of experience, called **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*) indicates, however, that what we call the **mind** is **not another entity** separate from the **body**. It is only an **activity of the body**, which can be **started or stopped** at will, just as breathing can be started or stopped consciously. Modern scientific research on the brain seems to confirm this fact.

What we call “**mind and body**” seems to be an **electro chemical activity** viewed from **two different angles**. When this activity is **observed objectively**, it is seen as an **activity of the body**. When this same activity is **observed subjectively**, it is seen as a **mental activity**. This makes it clear that what we call the **body** is an **objective experience**, while what we call the **mind** is a **subjective experience**. These are not two entities. They are the same activity viewed from two different angles: **subjective** (*ajjhattha*) and **objective** (*bahiddha*).

The Buddha has pointed out that what we commonly refer to as **mind** are merely **three activities of the body**, which are known to the modern scientist as **activities of the nervous system**. They are: **perception** (*viññāna*), **cognition** (*mano*), and **affection** (*citta*).

Modern scientific research has led to the discovery that **Perception** is the **reaction of the senses** to stimulation by the environment. **Cognition** is the activity of the **cerebral cortex** of the human brain, and **affection** is the activity of the **endocrine system** of the body, controlled by the amygdala of the limbic system of the brain.

There is also evidence to show that there is a part of the brain called the **Reticular Activating System** (RAS) that can **toggle** between cognitive activities of *mano* and the affective activities of *citta* so that a person can at one time be emotionally activated ignoring the principles of behaviour recognized by the *mano*, and at another time begin to be calm and composed following good principles of behaviour and good manners. The story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde reminds us of this kind of toggling behaviour. This kind of toggling is also displayed today in some people who get drunk by ingesting alcohol. This also happens to all of us sometimes when in a fit of anger or sexual obsession. This is why this introspective awareness is so important in our lives. It can stop this unconscious activity and begin to act consciously and rationally.

## Awakening from the dream of existence

The *Bodhisatta* did not remain forever in this unconscious or hibernated state called **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*). One might remain in this state, if needed, for not more than one week. **When one awakens** from this state, however, one is able to witness how the mental process creates the “**world**,” and even the “**self**” quite unconsciously. This means, the “**world**” that we

are aware of is a product of the unconscious process of perception and conception, and so is the “self” that we believe “exists in the world.” The “world” is perceived as an **objective experience**, and the “self” is perceived as a **subjective experience**. It is the **cognitive process** that creates the **objective “world,”** and it is the **affective process** that creates the **subjective “self.”** In other words, when one awakens from this state of **absolute stillness of mind**, one begins to become **consciously aware of the process** by which **perception and conception** takes place, culminating in **the “world” and the “self”** coming into being, resulting in the emotional SUFFERING.

## Genesis revealed by the Buddha

Although critics imagine that the Buddha was ignorant of how the world has come into being, it is in this explanation called *paticca samuppāda* that he reveals how the world is created by each individual by oneself and for oneself. In short, we are living in a world of our own creation. Each one’s world is separate from that of others, although we think we live in an external world common to all, created by an external agent. All human beings are the creators of their own world. Each one creates one’s own world. The world they create is a similar world because of the similar structure of their body, and they are able to communicate with others through language and share their experience with others. The **result** of this unconscious process of creation of a **world** and a **self**, through the process of **cognition** and **affection**, is that it creates “**the problem of existence**,” which is the “**miserable insecurity of life**,” due to the instability of all that is dependent on conditions.

Thus “**the problem of existence**,” comes into being, **depending on the necessary conditions**, following the **natural law of determinism**. This natural law is that **every natural occurrence in the world is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions**. It is the law on which all modern scientific technology is based. This

law came to be known in the West only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when science began. Therefore, people in the West call this period **the age of enlightenment**. They used this law to **conquer nature** and gratify their desire for comfort, convenience, security, and even to kill their enemies.

It was this same law, however, that the Buddha in India introduced to the world more than twenty-five centuries earlier. He did not use this law to **conquer objective external nature**. He used this same law to **transform the subjective mental nature** and solve the problem of existence. He called **this law the Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*) described as: “When conditions are present it comes into being, but when conditions are absent it ceases to be” (*hetuṇ paṭicca saṅbhutaṇ hetu bhanga nirujjati*).

This **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*) described by the Buddha is **more than mere determinism**, which points to the fact that things happen only due the presence of the necessary conditions. **Concurrence of Antecedents**, on the other hand, is also a **description of how things come to be** (*yatā bhutaṇ pajānāti*) including how the **world** as well as the **self** comes to be based on a **series of antecedents**, which are **subjective mental processes**. This process brings about an awareness of a “**world**” and a “**self**.” This means, the world that we are aware of is the product of a subjective mental process rather than an independent existence of an objective reality. In existential terminology, it is an **existence** without an **essence**, where existence denotes **that it is**, and essence denotes **what it is**. In Kantian terminology, the **world** and **self** are **phenomena** without a **noumenon**. In still another way of speaking, the **world** and **self** are **appearances** and **not realities**.

Therefore, what is called the **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*) is a natural mental process by which the “**world**” and the “**self**” come into being, along with the “**miserable insecurity of life**.” This is a **series of logical antecedents** that takes

**place simultaneously**, all at the same time. This is why it is called **The Concurrence of Antecedents**. Today it is known to modern scientists that all kinds of transmission: telephonic, telegraphics, radio, television, etc., is a concurrence of antecedence. It is a series of movements one coming after another at the same time. This is why we can hear by telephone or see on TV what is happening elsewhere at the same time.

## The Cognitive and the Affective

It is essential to understand that there are two main processes that constitute experience. They are, the Cognitive and the Affective. It is the Cognitive Process that perceives and conceives and so makes sense of the sensory experience. We become conscious of a “world” through the Cognitive Process. It is the Affective Process that becomes conscious of a “self” and gets involved in an emotional relationship between the “self” and the “world,” resulting in the arising of the **great problem of existence, which is DEATH**.

This **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*) is a continuous mental process that goes on unconsciously, throughout our lives, producing a new “world” and a new “self” intermittently every moment. This continuous **dynamic** process of **change** gives rise to a **false sense** of permanent **static** existence. In other words, it is a continuous process of change (*nānattatā*). From birth to death, it is a **process of change** or **becoming**, and not a **static presence** or **being** (*bhava*).

The fact is that we erroneously think of ourselves as **static beings** (*bhava*), while we are also aware of our **birth**, **ageing**, and **impending death** (*nānattatā*). We spend our entire life making an effort to prevent, or at least **delay** this **eventuality**, but **without success**. The obvious **solution** is to **realize** that we are **not blessed** with a **static existence** (*bhava nirodha*). Our existence is **only an**

appearance, and not a reality. If we do not really exist, then why worry about this inevitable death of a body, which is neither really existing nor is it “me?”

## The ultimate consequence

If the gradual reduction of experience, or the cognitive ecstasy, as described above is practiced seriously and conscientiously, it is possible for the meditator to become at least a **Non-returner** (*Anāgāmi*) if not a **Breaker of Bonds** (*Arahat*). In other words, if the meditation is practiced as described above, it is possible to **Awaken from the dream of existence**, and reach the state of **Awakening** (*sammā sambodhi*) as the Buddha did. Yet it is also possible to **become Awakened without** going through this process of **Absolute Stopping of the Mind** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*). It is to make things easier that the Buddha pointed out the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**.

The individual who follows the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, and is emancipated by Awakening at the **fourth ecstasy** (*jhāna*), is called one who has **Awakened through Insight** (*paññā vimutti*). The individual who goes through the four ecstasies (*jhāna*) plus the **cognitive realms** (*āyatana*), and absolutely stops the mind (*saññā vedayita nirodha*), and Awakens by observing the process of creation or concurrence of logical antecedents (*paticca samuppāda*) is called a person who is **Awakened in both ways** (*ubhato bhaga vimutti*). The chief disciples of the Buddha, Sariputta and Moggallana, were among those who had gone through this “double awakening” (*ubhato bhaga vimutti*). A person who has gone through the four Cognitive realms, but not attained emancipation, is called **affectively liberated** (*ceto vimutti*). This means the **affectively liberated** person (*ceto vimutti*) is not necessarily emancipated. We shall go into a discussion of this **important problem** in more detail subsequently.

# Chapter III

## Concurrence of Logical Antecedents

### (*Paticca Samuppāda*)

#### Our regret

It is unfortunate that since the first century after the Buddha, the pure teachings of the Buddha were lost due to pollution by foreign concepts. Since then, the followers began to lay emphasis on “*kamma* and rebirth” rather than the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality** (*Cattari Ariya Saccāni*). The Buddha himself has foretold this degeneration of the teachings when he said: “In the future my followers will begin to speak about my lower level teachings rather than my higher teachings like emptiness (*suññatā*).” This idea of emptiness was taken over by the Mahayanists but they were unable to fully comprehend the meaning of emptiness (*suññatā*). Two well-known thinkers attempted to explain *suññatā* but they differed. They were *Nāgarjuna* the analyst and *Asanḡha* the idealist.

In the *Sabbāsava Sutta* in the Majjhima Nikaya the Buddha points out that if a person begins to think in terms of *kamma* and rebirth he will never be able to attain *Nibbāna* because by doing so he/she confirms the idea of “self” as (*sakkāya ditthi*). The genuine follower of the Buddha, *Ariya Sāvaka*, on the other hand, thinks only of suffering, its cause, its end, and the way to its end without thinking of a “self” that suffers. This directs him straight to *Nibbāna*.

What appears today in the modern world as Buddhism: whether Theravada, Mahayana, Vajirayana, Pure-land, or Zen are adulterated forms of the original teaching of the Buddha. Fortunately,

the Theravadins preserved the original teaching in the form of the *sutta pitaka* and *vinaya pitaka* in memory and later in writing, though they could not understand fully what they memorized or wrote. The original teaching of the Buddha is not completely lost, however. It is available at least in written form in the *Sutta Pitaka* preserved by the Theravadins, even though it is not fully comprehended. An intelligent person, educated in modern science, philosophy, and psychology, who studies the *suttas* carefully both in theory and practice, may sometimes be able to comprehend at least to a workable degree, the profound teachings of the Buddha.

*Buddha = Dhamma = Patticca Samuppāda*

The Buddha has often said: “He who sees me sees the Dhamma, and he who sees the Dhamma sees me.” As he has also said: “He who sees the Dhamma sees the *Paticca Samuppāda*,” and He who sees the *Paticca Samuppāda* sees the Dhamma,” We may also conclude that **he who sees the Buddha sees the *Paticca Samuppāda* and vice versa.** This means, if we have never seen the **Buddha** in person, we could still see the Buddha if we see the *Paticca Samuppāda*. This could be far better than looking at a golden image of the Buddha, or even one made of a precious stone or marble. What is great about the Buddha is not his body but his mind. *Paticca Samuppada* represents his mind. What this means is that **the entire teaching of the Buddha** and the Buddha himself is founded on the *Paticca Samuppāda*.

We are equipped today with the *Paticca Samuppāda* in the words of the Buddha, but unfortunately very few scholars, if any, have understood the real meaning of those words. Today there are many versions of the explanation. There is the traditional explanation of the Theravada Buddhists, as well as the traditional explanation of the Mahayana and the Vajirayana schools of Buddhism. There are also two popular versions: one given by a Western scholar Bhikkhu Ñānaweera, and an interesting version of a famous monk in Thailand, Venerable Buddhadasa Mahathera. There are also other interpretations of

scholars well known and unknown. Anyone interested could go into a comparative study of these different explanations of the words of the Buddha.

What we offer in this book, however, is only the explanation that we use in our meditation system, which is meaningful to us. This is not something to be blindly believed in, but something the meditator will discover oneself as one continues on the meditative path given in this book.

It is important to note that *paticca samuppāda* or the **concurrency of logical antecedents** is a description of the experience of the Buddha after his **Awakening from the Dream of Existence** (*nirodha samāpatti*). It is also a description of **how the mental process creates the “world,” the “self,” and the Problem of Existence** (*bhava dukkha*).

It is not a description of how rebirth takes place, as the traditional commentators (*atuvāchāriya*) make us believe. The tradition holds that our problem is **rebirth** (*jāti*) but the *Sutta Pitaka* points out that the real problem is the concept and feeling of **existence** (*bhava*), which is a delusion. Nirvāna has been described by the Buddha not as the **ending of rebirth** (*jāti nirodho*), but as the **ending of the delusion of existence** (*bhava nirodho Nibbānaṃ*), by **awakening from the dream of existence** (*samma sambodhi*). This will be further explained in due course.

## Concurrency of Logical Antecedents

This **Concurrency of Logical Antecedents** is an extraordinary account of genesis, which is an explanation of how the “world” and the “self” came into being through a **simultaneously occurring series of logical antecedents**, which are subjective mental processes. The **physical world** we are aware of is a **product** of such a **mental process**

going on within us. According to this explanation, **we are constantly watching a moving cinema throughout our lives.** All that we know is known through this cinematography, which is a **subjective mental process of experiencing.**

What we call an experience is a **mental process of perception and conception that begins at the five sense bases and is carried to the brain as the sixth sense** through nerve impulses. **Though regarded as mental, it is also a physical activity.** Experience as understood normally is of two kinds: 1) subjective experience and 2) objective experience. The **world** that we are aware of is an **objective experience**, and the **mind** we are aware of is a **subjective experience.** What the Buddha points out is that the **objectively experienced world** is also a **subjective experience** because the eye works like a camera. The picture is inside the camera and not outside. All that is experienced though the senses are inside and not outside.

This **process of perception and conception** is a series of **antecedents**, one coming after the other. An antecedent is an incident that comes before another incident. In speaking of “the **concurrence of antecedents**,” we are referring to a series of antecedents **occurring at the same time.** Of course then a question arises: “If it is a series of incidents one coming before the other, how can they occur at the same time?”

In order to answer this question, we have to point out that there are three kinds of antecedents: spatial, temporal, and logical.

- (1) If we speak of a row of pillars that come one after another, that is a series of spatial antecedents.
- (2) If we speak of the ringing of a bell where a series of sounds come one after another, that is a series of temporal antecedents.

- (3) If we simply count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, we are referring to a series of logical antecedents. They are not in space or time. Logically 1 comes before 2, and 2 comes before 3, and so on.

This means when we speak of our “**concurrency of logical antecedents**,” we are really speaking of a **series of logical antecedents that occur at the same time**. This is why it is called the **concurrency of logical antecedents**.

This concurrency of antecedents is explained by the Buddha as follows:

With the precedence (*paticca*) of the **eye** (*cakkhu*) and **mental images** (*rupa*) there is **eye perception** (*cakkhu viññāna*). These three things being together (*tinnaṃ sangati*) there is **cognition** (*passo*). When cognition precedes (*passa paccayā*) there is feeling (*vedanā*). When one feels (*yaṃ vedeti*) one is also aware of sensations (*taṃ sanjānāti*). When there is sensation (*yaṃ sanjānāti*) there is inference (*taṃ vitakketi*). When there is inference (*yaṃ vitakketi*), there is recognition (*taṃ pāpānceti*). To recognize is to identify something by placing it in a category (re + cognition).

This cognition based on (*tato nidānaṃ*) categorization of sensations (*pāpanca saññā sankā*) begins to influence an individual's (*purisaṃ*) behaviour (*samudācaranti*) in relation to past, present, and future images (*rupa*) cognized. (Eg. A young girl opened a closet and a dog jumped out. She was frightened. When she grew up to adulthood she continued to fear closed spaces (claustrophobia).

The term “*pāpanca*” has become problematic to scholars. We are using our own translation, which we consider to be more meaningful and reasonable than the common translations used by scholars so far. We use of the term “recognition” to translate the term “*pāpanca*” because the dialogue between Maha Kotthita and Ven. Sariputta (*in the Ang.II 161*) seems to clarify the point Ven. Kotthita

asked Ven. Sariputta: “When the six sensual fields cease without remainder is there anything left?” In reply Ven. Sariputta stated: “*appapancaṇa pappanceti*.” This seems to mean: “You are attempting to identify something by placing it in a category, when it does not belong to any category.” This is similar to the statement of Immanuel Kant when someone asked him to describe the “noumenon.” He said, “you are attempting to put into a category something that does not belong to any category. This means: to re-cognize something is to place it in a category (*papaṇca saññā saṅkā*). Here *papaṇca* = re-cognition; *saññā* = sensation; *saṅkā* = categorizing.

*Papaṇca abhiratā pajā* = people in general are very curious to know things by placing them in categories (re-cognizing them). The Tathagata is not so curious (*nippapaṇcā tathāgatā*).

The *Madupindika Sutta* explains how a series of antecedents occur simultaneously. In other words, the Buddha is speaking about a series of antecedents one coming after the other but not in time. They are only logical antecedents occurring simultaneously. This is the meaning of **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*).

DHAMMA, the teaching of the Buddha, is called *akālika*, which means “not-temporal” because it is **independent of time and space**. Dhamma is an explanation of how time and space come into being. Therefore, Dhamma is the foundation of time and space. Time and space are dependent on the Dhamma, not vice versa.

Dhamma really means “**experience**,” or even better, it is the process of experiencing. In more detail, experience is the perceptual and conceptual **process** of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking and feeling. The **concept** “existence” is a **product** of the process of experiencing, and therefore **experience precedes existence**. To **exist** is to occupy space and time. Therefore, **space and time** are **products** of experience.

Experience is dichotomous. It is divided into two parts subjective and objective. The subjective part we tend to personalize as “mine” and the objective part is alienated as “other.” Personalization creates a personal “self” or personality, which is separate from the alienated external “world.” This dichotomy becomes the foundation for an emotional relationship between the subjective “self” and the objective “other.”

What we call matter is an objective experience. What we call mind is a subjective experience. What I call “I,” “me,” “mine,” or “self,” are subjective experiences. What I call world, matter, energy, people, animals, plants, or inanimate objects are objective experiences. Matter is perceived as solids and liquids. Energy is perceived as heat and motion.

What we call the **concurrence of logical antecedents** is therefore nothing but an account of the process by which we experience the **objective world** and the **subjective self**. It is how the Buddha saw the **genesis** of the **common reality** perceived by mankind. It is the process of experiencing the “**world**” and the “**self**” and the resulting “**suffering**” (*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkandassa samudayo hoti*). It also points the **way out** of suffering (*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkandassa nirodo hoti*). Suffering therefore is the relationship between the self and the world.

It also points out that the **world** we are aware of, as well as the “**self**” we are aware of is only a **dream**. We **can awaken** from this dream, and thereby both “**self**” and the “**world**” can **disappear**. What we experience **then** will only be the **experience** – **DHAMMA**. Therefore, the Buddha said:

**Non-manifest perception**, limitless, and all clear  
No solid, liquid, heat or motion is cognized  
Not even a trace of an image or name met  
When perception is stopped, all objects disappear

*Anidassana viññānaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabaṃ  
Etta pathavi ca apo ca tejo vayo nagadati  
Etta nāmaṃ ca rupaṃ ca asesāṃ uparujjati  
Viññānassa nirodena etta etaṃ uparujjati*

Once a *deva* (celestial being) visited the Buddha and asked a question. “If a person could travel in space at an extremely high speed, can he reach the end of the world?”

“No,” was the Buddha’s reply.

“Without reaching the end of the world, however, one cannot bring suffering to an end,” continued the Buddha.

He further said: “The world, the beginning of the world, the end of the world, and the way leading to the end of the world is in this fathom long body itself, along with its perceptions and conceptions (*saññimhi samānake*). In other words, this “world” and the “self” are **products** of the process of **perception** and **cognition**. (*Robitassa Sutta* Ang. II 46 iv, v,45)

Immediately after his Awakening, the Buddha is supposed to have said:

“Many a life in *Saṃsāra* did I run  
Seeking the Creator but all in vain  
Never did I meet him, it was not fun  
Painful is birth again and again  
Now you’re seen, you creator of pain  
Never will you create this pain again  
Thy structure is dismantled  
Thy foundation destroyed  
The mental creation did stop  
The emotional urge did drop.”

It was before the Buddha's Awakening that he searched for the Creator through many lives as a Bodhisatta. It was during his Awakening from the dream of existence and becoming a BUDDHA that he realized that the Creator was his own mind. This means the world that we are aware of is the product of a subjective mental process rather than an independent existence of an objective reality. In existential terminology, it is an **existence** without an **essence**, where existence denotes **that it is**, and essence denotes **what it is**. In Kantian terminology, the **world** and **self** are **phenomena** without a **noumenon**. In still another way of speaking, the **world** and **self** are **appearances** and **not realities**.

Awakening from this dream of existence is what the Buddha taught. This awakening cannot be achieved by the Buddha for others. It has to be done by each individual by oneself. The Buddha can only show the way.

### **Concurrence of Antecedents (*Paticca Samuppāda*)**

This **subjective mental process** described by the Buddha explains how the **world**, **self**, and **suffering** came into being through a series of logical antecedents. It is this description that is called the **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*). **Concurrence of Antecedents** is based on a natural law on which all natural events, both physical and mental, are based. This law is recognized today in the Western world as **Determinism**, which is the basis of all modern scientific technology. This law was recognized in the West only during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, when science began. This period is today called the **Age of Enlightenment**. Before this period Western thought was governed by the **religious dogma** that every natural event occurred only due to the power of God, the supernatural Creator of the world. When this law of determinism was recognized educated people lost faith in religious dogmas. As a result, many revolutions took place such as the French revolution, and the Marxist revolution.

This law of Determinism was used in the West to conquer nature, and transform the natural environment to suit the needs of hungry humanity. All the modern wonders of scientific technology is the result of the use of this law of determinism.

This conquest of nature however has not solved the **problem of existence**. The problem of existence is that **all living organisms on this planet, both animals and plant, are struggling to exist in an environment that is detrimental to the struggle**. The struggle continues despite this detriment and the result is what we call the **evolution of the species**. The result of this evolution is the **origination of the human being** with a brain that can think and **become aware of this problem**.

It was this **intelligent human being** that began to use his intelligence to conquer nature. This effort of the human being is a failure because it has only resulted in an approach to the utter destruction of all life through nuclear war.

This human being has not even looked into the problem or become aware of the problem, though it has blindly struggled to conquer nature. It was in the East that the human being became aware of the problem with the coming of the BUDDHA. It was the Buddha who used the intelligence to understand the problem, its cause, and its solution by removing the cause.

What the Buddha saw was that this **unconscious struggle to exist** was a mistake. It was an **impossible struggle** against nature. Existence is a static concept in a dynamic reality. We are suffering from a delusion of existence. Existence is only a dream from which we must awaken.

The Buddha awakened from this dream and taught others how to awaken from this dream. Only a few listen to him. Out of those who listened to him only a few understood what he said. Out of the few who understood only a few awaken from the dream of

existence. Yet the problem is a serious one. His message is still waiting for those with a little dust in their eyes to see the mistake we are making and awaken from the dream of existence.

Unfortunately, this problem cannot be solved by one person for the others. Each individual has to solve the problem by oneself. The Buddha can only show the way. The solution has to be achieved by each individual by oneself.

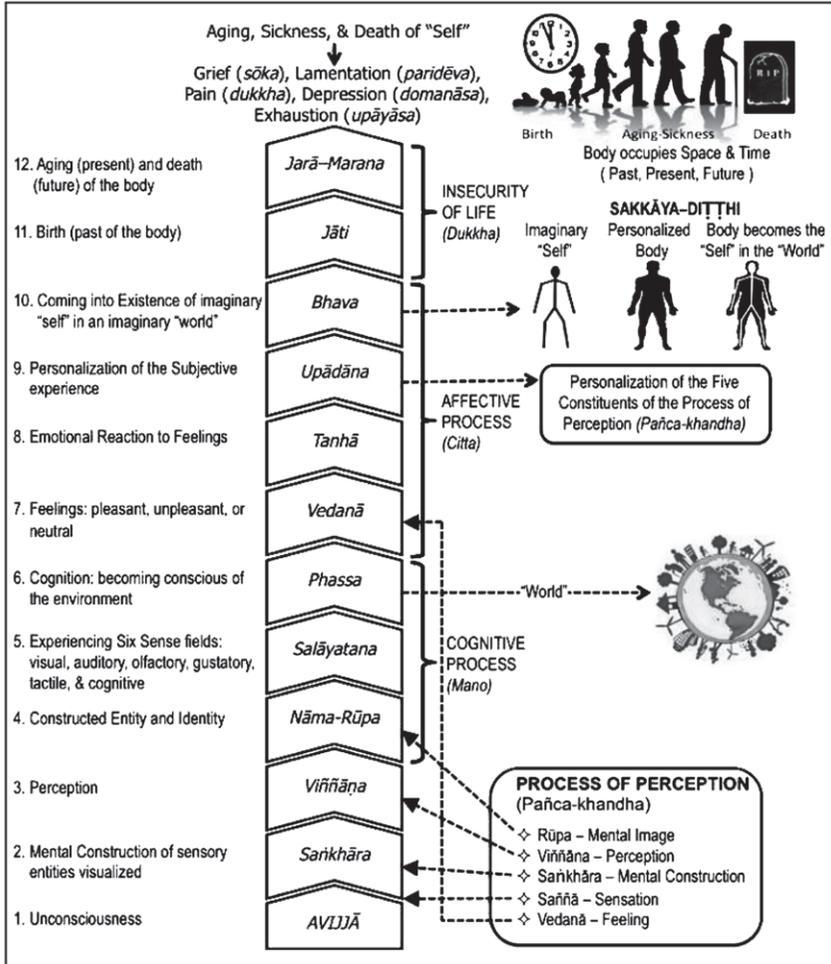
It was the Buddha who brought attention to this problem and pointed out that the emotional nature of mankind is what needs correction. The modern world is gradually becoming aware of this need to change human nature.

The Buddha pointed out that we have two minds: the rational and emotional. We are dominated by the irrational and emotional mind.

This was why in the East the Buddha began to use the law of determinism to conquer the human mind, rather than to conquer external nature. By so doing he solved the **problem of existence**, by awakening from the dream of existence (*sammā sambodhi*). Having awakened himself, he taught others how to do so.

# The Buddhist Concept of Genesis

The words of the Buddha are stated as follows:



## Introduction to *Paticca Samuppāda*

The problem of existence is **the insecurity of life** created by a **conflict between human reason and human emotion**. It is **human reason** that recognizes the **reality of external circumstances**, while human emotions being unaware of reality are blindly concerned about **human emotional needs**. It is this conflict that Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis pointed to as **neurosis**. It is also what the modern existential philosophers have referred to as, **fear and trembling**, or **anguish**. They have, however, been unable to find an adequate solution to this problem, other than to take the **leap of faith** as Kierkegaard did or **resort to Marxism** as Sartre did. It was the Buddha who solved the problem in the East, **not by changing** the external circumstances, **but by changing the mind** of man. He solved it by understanding that the **objective world** and the **subjective self**, are only a creation of the **process of perception and feeling**, and therefore existence that the **existentialists harped on** was not even a **rational concept** but was only an **emotional feeling** based on **imagination**.

This means, what we observe as the **world and self** are not **realities** but **appearances**. Both our **subjective** and the **objective** experiences are **really subjective**, and **therefore a delusion**. Even the **conflict between emotion and external circumstances** is really a conflict between **emotion and reason**. **Suffering** is understood to be based on the **delusion or dream of existence**. It is **only by awakening from this dream of existence** that the **problem is solved**.

**Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*) is a description of a process of awakening that begins with an awakening from a state of unconscious or a state of insentience (*avijjā*). This awakening is an opening into an awareness of **objective sensations** (*saññā*) and **subjective feelings** (*vedanā*).

**Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*) therefore consists of two sequential processes: the **cognitive** and the **affective**.

It starts with the **Cognitive process** that begins with **construction** (*sankhāra*) and ends with **cognition** (*phassa*). This is followed by the **Affective process** that begins with **feeling** (*vedanā*) and ends with **ageing and death** (*jarā maraṇa*).

## Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail

### The process of perception

1. **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*), the process that **mistakenly creates an existence** of a **subject** and an **object** begins from a state of **Absolute Unconsciousness** (*Avijjā*).
2. From this state of **Absolute unconsciousness**, **mental Construction** (*Sankhāra*) begins.
3. The building materials used for construction are the **subjective feelings** (*Vedanā*) and the **objective sensations** (*Saññā*).
4. **Objective Sensations** (*Saññā*) become the building material for the **Cognitive Process** that builds **the world**.
5. **Subjective Feelings** (*Vedanā*) become the building material for the **Affective Process** that builds **the self**.
6. First arises the **cognitive process of construction**, which is **Perception** (*Viññāna*), the rudimentary awareness that distinguishes between one object and another.
7. When perception is completed, the five constituents of perception come into being:
  - a) Mental Image (*rūpa*)
  - b) Feeling (*vedanā*)
  - c) Sensation (*saññā*)
  - d) Construction (*sankhāra*)
  - e) Perception (*viññāna*).

The continuation of these constitutes of perception is not a static existence of an entity but the continuity of a process of activity that continues without end like the continuity of a flame that is dependent on the necessary conditions. This activity can stop only when the necessary conditions are absent.

### Perception develops into Cognition (*phassā*)

8. What is perceived through the **five senses** (*pañcā indriyā*) is brought to the thinking brain or **cerebral cortex** (*mano*), which uses rational thought and memory to give meaning to what was perceived. This way a **percept** (*viññānā*) is transformed into a **concept** (*dhammā*). Through this process of conception an **entity** in the form of an **image** (*rupā*) is created with an **identity** in the form of a **name** (*nāmā*). This way a world made of **Six Sensual Realms** (*saḷāyatānā*): of **vision, sound, smell, taste, touch, and concepts** (*dhammā*) comes into being.
9. With the coming of the world of Sensual Realms, cognition (*phassā*) is completed and a **world consciousness** arises.
10. **Cognition** (*phassā*) is completed by **being Conscious** of an **external world**.

### Beginning of the Affective Process (*citta*)

11. Once the consciousness of the **world of six realms** occurs due to the completion of the process of Cognition, an **emotional reaction** (*tanhā*) starts, in relation to perceived **feelings** (*vedanā*).
12. This **emotional reaction** brings about a **dichotomy** of the experience into: a **subjective** reaction and an **objective** object to which the reaction occurs.

13. Then the **subjective experience is personalized** as “mine” and the **objective experience is alienated** as “not mine,” or “other.”
14. This **personalization** (*upādāna*) of the subjective process (mine) results in the **notion of “I”** and the **notion of a “self”** (*etan mama, eto hamasmi, eto me attāti*).
15. Once the “self” has come into being through **personalization** (*upādāna*), that “self” is only a **feeling**, and not a visible object.
16. Then the **question** arises: **what is the object** that can be referred to as the “self”? The answer naturally obtained is the **Body**, because only the **body** is seen to occupy **space and time**.
17. The body then becomes the “self” (*sakkāya ditthi*). Even others begin to refer to the body, as **my “self,”** and so do “I.”
18. If the **body** that exists in space and time is my “self,” then this **body**, that occupies time, has a **past, present, and future**, which means “I” have a **past present and future**.
19. That means, the **past of the body** becomes **my past**, which is **birth** (*jāti*). The **future of the body** becomes **my future**, which is **death** (*marana*). The **present of the body** becomes **my present**, which is **ageing** (*jarā*).
20. This means, **by making the body “my self,”** I have become **subject to birth, ageing and death**. Along with this **identification with the body** comes **grief** (*soka*), **lamentation** (*parideva*), **pain** (*dukkha*), **distress** (*domanassa*), and **exhaustion** (*upāyāsa*).
21. If the **body was not “my self,”** there would be **no birth, ageing, and death** for me; **no grief, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair**.

## How did the body become my self (*sakkāya ditthi*)?

22. The **body** became “my self” because I identified the **body** as my “self.”
23. I identified the **body** as “my self” because there was **no object** to identify as “my self,” other than the “feeling of self.”
24. The “feeling of self” was the **result of personalization of the emotional reaction.**
25. It was only the **subjective experience** of emotion that I **personalized.**
26. This **personalization** as “mine” lead to the necessity of “self.” This self needed an **identity as an object that occupied space and time.**
27. The only object available was the **body.** Yet this body that I refer to is only a **collection of mental images.**
28. I not only see a collection of **mental images** as the **body** and “self,” I also **feel** a neutral **sensation** as the **body** and “self.”
  - (1) Although the **body** is seen as an **objective experience.**
  - (2) The **body** is felt as a **subjective experience.**
  - (3) It is the **feeling** of “self” that makes me **feel** the presence of “my self.”
29. The **image** that I am aware of as the **body** or “self” is **constructed** using **feelings, and sensations.** In other words, what we call the body is only a **mental construct** created by the **process of perception.**

30. My “self” or “personality” therefore is the **result of personalizing the subjective experience of perception**, represented in the form of the **five constituents of the process of perception**.
31. Therefore, in short, suffering is not the suffering of a noumenal true “self” but the suffering of **five constituents of perception** (body, feelings, sensations, construction, and perception) that are mistakenly personalized as “self” (*sankittena pañca upadānakkhandā dukkhā*).

## CHAPTER IV

### Elucidation of Fundamentals

**T**he comprehension of the **Concurrence of Logical Antecedents** leads to the recognition of the **fundamentals**. This recognition brings about the **paradigm shift** from existence to experience. **Experience is all that we can talk about.** All other things originate from experience. Experience is the most fundamental of all. (*Sabba Sutta – Samyutta Nikaya*).

People normally think: the world exists first. Then “**I come into existence and meet the ‘world,’ and I see the world.**”

The fact, however, is: **seeing arises first** and it is only **from the seeing** (or perception) that the **‘I’** and the **‘world’** come into being.

In the **seeing** there is only the **seeing** (*Ditthe dittha mattan bhavissati*): there is neither the **seer** nor the **seen**.

In other words, **experience precedes existence**. Existence does not come before experience as it is commonly thought. Existence is only a product of the process of perception, which is experience. Experience produces the subject and the object that are supposed to exist. It is this experience that the Buddha analysed into **the five constituents of the process of perception**.

Modern research on the brain has indicated that this process called experience is the activity of a part of the brain called the cerebral cortex that does the thinking. The brain of course is a part of the body. Therefore, it is the body that does the thinking and

not the mind. The term “mind” refers only to three activities of the body: **thinking, feeling** and **perception**. Thinking and feeling are technically called cognition and affection. The Buddha had three terms for these activities: perception (*viññāna*), cognition (*mano*) and affection (*citta*).

It is with cognition (*mano*) that we make meaning out of what we perceive. Perception is only the reaction of the organism to stimulation by the environment. We are organisms in an environment. We have five senses that can be stimulated by the environment. The organism reacts to this stimulus and so perception takes place. What is perceived is brought to the brain by nerves and the cerebral cortex or neocortex gives meaning to what is perceived. This giving meaning to what is perceived is called cognition. According to the meaning given by cognition an emotion is aroused. This arousal of emotion is called affection. The emotion aroused is expressed in action. This action is called karma (in Sanskrit), or *kamma* (in Pali). The action may be to obtain what we desire, to get rid of what we hate, or run away from what we fear.

This arousal of emotion is what is called stress today. Stress is a disturbance of the body and mind, if continued too long it can be damaging not only to the body and mind but also to others around and society in general. All crimes in the world, all wars, murders, and every problematic human disturbance is a result of emotions. These emotions are blind and unconsciously carried out but dependent on the necessary conditions.

It is only the cognitive faculty that is sensible. It is the cognitive faculty that should dominate our mind, and not the emotions, but very often it is the emotional or affective faculty that dominates our mind. This is what makes a human being an animal. What is special about the human being is the cognitive faculty. The glorious aim of the Buddha was to make the normal half human being a supernormal fully human being.

Feeding, sleeping, fear and sex  
Is common to both man and beast  
Cognition does make man very special  
When low in cognition man is a beast

*Ahara nidra bhaya maitunanca  
Samanya me tad pasubih samanah  
Dharmohi tesā madiko viseso  
Dharmena hinah pasubuh samānah*

This illustrates the grave need of man to practice meditation. What meditation does is to make the cognitive faculty of man dominate his mind rather than the affective. This involves a change in the way we think, so that the emotions will stop dominating our mind.

The importance of changing our thinking to stop the unconscious and irrational emotional behaviour has been recognized only recently in Western psychology. This fact was fully understood and used by the Buddha to transform personality by radically eliminating all self-centered emotions. This was the meaning of becoming a spiritually Awakened Buddha or an emancipated *Arahat*.

It is in the sermon called the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* that the Buddha explains the difference between the thinking of the emancipated individual and the normal person. In other words, this explains the meaning of the paradigm shift from existence to experience (*nirodha samāpatti*).

## **The Buddha's elucidation of the Fundamentals**

The Buddha says in his Discourse on Fundamentals (*Mūlapariyāya Sutta*):

- (1) The ordinary human being perceives a solid as a solid (*patavim patavito sanjānati*).

- (2) The Emancipated One (*Arahat*) **superperceives** a solid as a solid (*patavim patavito abhijānāti*).
- (1) The ordinary human being having perceived the solid comes to the conclusion the solid exists (*patavim patavito saññatva pataviṇ maññati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* having **superperceived** the solid does not come to the conclusion the solid exists (*patavim patavito abhiññatva pataviṇ namaññati*).

This difference in conception between the ordinary person and the *Arahat* is similar to the difference between the bird and the human being in front of a mirror, as described earlier.

The *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* goes further:

- (1) The ordinary person concludes that the solid exists and also of what it is made (*patavito maññati pataviyā maññati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* does not conclude that it exists or of what it is made (*patavito namaññati pataviyā namaññati*).

It is useful to compare this statement with the statement of existential philosophers who distinguish between existence and essence. Existence is expressed by the statement, “that it is” and the essence expressed by the statement, “what it is.” For example, if there is a cup made of clay its existence is expressed by the statement, “there is a cup.” Its essence is expressed by the statement, “it is made of clay.” This is how Jean-Paul Sartre made the statement, “existence precedes essence,” for something must exist before we can talk of what it is made. Sartre considered this to be the essential premise on which existential philosophy stands.

From the Buddhist perspective, however, “experience precedes existence.” This is because **existence** is a concept that arose from experience, which is the mental process of perception.

In other words, our paradigm has shifted from existential thinking to experiential thinking. Existential philosophers drew attention to the problem of existence, which is that every human being is aware of his own existence and also aware of his own death, which brings about anguish: anxiety, worry, fear and trembling. The existential philosophers could not, however, solve the problem other than to take the leap of faith in God, or wait till human intelligence grows or evolves to a capable level. It was the Buddha who offered the ultimate solution through a paradigm shift. According to the Buddha, the problem was created by existential thinking. Therefore, it can be solved only through a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking. This is why **existence** (*bhava*), according to the Buddha, is a **delusion**, or a **dream**, from which **mankind must Awaken** by switching on to experiential thinking. Entering into experiential thinking is what is called *nirodha samāpatti*.

The *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* goes further:

- (1) The ordinary person personalizes the solid as “mine” (*pataviṇ meti maññati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* does not personalize the solid as “mine” (*pataviṇ meti namaññati*).
- (1) The ordinary person takes delight in the solid (*pataviṇ abhinandati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* does not take delight in the solid (*pataviṇ na abhinandati*).
- (1) Referring to the ordinary person the Buddha asks, “why does he do so?” (*tankissa hetu*). And answers, “because he does not comprehend” (*apariññattassati*).
- (2) Referring to the *Arahat* the Buddha asks, “why does he do so?” (*tankissa hetu*). And answers, “because he comprehends” (*pariññattassati*).

This is the essence of the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, which discusses the differences between the ordinary person and the Awakened One (*Arāhat*) in relation to everything experienced, including *Nibbāna*.

The paradigm shift (*nirodha samāpatti*) where the meditator withdraws from the paradigm of existence (*bhava*) and gets established in the paradigm of experience (*nirodha*), brings about the freedom or liberation (*vimutti*) from emotional excitements (*tanhā*) and accompanying suffering (*dukkha*), ending in the imperturbable serenity, *Nibbāna*. This means the mind that was purified will never become polluted again.

To come out of *samādhi* is to pollute the mind. He/she can move from one level of *samādhi* to another, but he/she has to remain at least in the first *jhāna*. In the first *jhāna*, it is possible to think and reason out and even discuss the Dhamma, but not be engaged in emotional thoughts. This fact is indicated in the fifth verse in the *Ratana Sutta*: “The Buddha has greatly extolled the uninterrupted *Samadhi*, which is equal to no other” (*yambuddhasetto parivannayi suciṇ samadhimanantarikaññamahu samādhina tena samona vijjatthi...*).

When we say that the emancipator can never be out of *samadhi*, a question may arise: “Does it mean that the emancipator is always in the experiential mode?” The answer is “no.”

Although the attention is withdrawn from the existential paradigm during the paradigm shift (*Nirodhasamāpatti*), it does not mean that the paradigm of existence is given up forever. When it becomes necessary to communicate with ordinary people, the Awakened One returns to the existential paradigm for that purpose, and goes back again to the experiential paradigm. These two modes can be changed from time to time, and are seen as two kinds of *Nibbāna*:

- (1) *Saupadisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the *Arahat* is in the existential mode.
- (2) *Anupadisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the *Arahat* is in the experiential mode.

Although this is so, today the Theravada tradition explains these two kinds of *Nibbāna* in a different way. They explain it as follows:

- (1) *Saupadisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the *Arahat* is alive.
- (2) *Anupadisesa Nibbāna* – experienced after the death of the *Arahat*.

This point is clarified in a *Nibbānadhātu sutta* #44 in the *Itivuttaka*:

“Monks, there are two modes of *Nibbāna* (*Dve’me bhikkhave nibbāna dhātuyo*).

What are the two? (*Katamā dve*).”

The personal mode, and the impersonal mode (*saupādisesa ca anupādisesa ca nibbāna dhātu*).

What monks is the personal mode of *Nibbāna*? (*Katamā ca bhikkhave saupādisesā nibbāna dhātu*). In this case monks, a monk is an emancipator, free of influences, has actualized the potential, accomplished the task, laid down the burden, realized the ideal, broken the bonds to being, liberated through tranquility and insight (*Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṇ hoti, khinasavo, vusitavā, katakaraṇīyo, ohitabhāro, anuppattasattho, parikkhina bhavasaññojano, sammadañña vimutti*).

While in this mode, the five senses are active, and able to experience the pleasant and unpleasant sensations, and therefore experiences pleasure and pain (*Tassa tiṭṭhanteva pañcindriyāni,*

*yesa avighātattā, manāpa amanāpa paccanubhoti, sukhadukkhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti).*

Yet he is free from lust, hate, and delusion (*Tassa yo rāgakkhayo, dosakkhayo, mohakkhayo*).

This, monks, is the personal mode of Nibbāna (*Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave saupādisesa nibbāna dhātu*).

What, monks, is the impersonal mode of Nibbāna? (*Katamā ca bhikkhave anupādisesa nibbānadhātu*).

In this case monks, a monk is an emancipator, free of influences, has actualized the potential, accomplished the task, laid down the burden, realized the ideal, broken the bonds to being, liberated through tranquility and insight (*Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṃ hoti khināsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasattho parikkhinabhavasaññojano sammadaññā vumutto*).

*In this very life, monks, he remains experiencing no sensations, insentient (Tassa idheva bhikkhave sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sītī bhavissanti).*

*This monks is the impersonal mode of Nibbāna (Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave anupādisesā nibbānadhātu).*

*These two did the seer expound ("Dve imā cakkhumatā pakāsītā).*

*The unconditioned state of Nibbāna (Nibbānadhātu anissitena tādīnā).*

*One is the state to be experienced here and now (Ekā hi dhātu idha diṭṭhadhammikā).*

*With personality but existence ceased (Saupādisesā bhavanettisankhaya).*

*Other without personality and without existence (Anupādisesā pana samparāyikā).*

Where existence of every kind ceases (*Yamhi nirujjhanti bhavāni sabbaso*).

The experience of apperception without construction (*Ye etadaññāya padaṇ asankhataṇ*).

The emancipated mind has ceased to exist (*Vimuttacittā bhavanettisankhaya*).

Has realized the embodiment of Dhamma (*te dhammasārādhigamā khaye ratā*).

Brought all states of existence to an end (*Pahaṅsu te sabbabhavāni tādino'ti*).

Thus did the Lord proclaim (*Ayampi tho vutto bhagavatā*).

This means *Anupadisesa Nibbāna* is not the experience of the Arahāt after death of the physical body but the *Nirodha Samāpatti*.

This means *Anupadisesa Nibbāna* is not the experience of the Arahāt after death of the physical body but the *Nirodha Samāpatti*.

## What is Truth?

Being in these two modes breaks up the idea of truth into existential truth (*sammuti sacca*) and experiential truth (*paramatta sacca*). This means there is no such thing as an absolute truth. To hold one idea as truth is to become narrow minded, and to ignore the validity of its opposite. This fact is expressed by the Buddha in the analogy of the elephant and the blind men. The Buddha points out this fact also in the *Cula-viyuha Sutta*, in the *Sutta Nipātha*, in verse form as follows:

If truth is one, and no second exists  
Debates will never arise among folk  
A variety of truths they themselves do form  
Gurus therefore never speak of one truth

*Ekam hi saccam na dutiyamatthi  
Yasmim pajā no vivade pajānam,  
Nāna te saccāni sayam thunanti  
Tasmā na ekam samanā vadanti*

Never was there a variety of truths  
Other than sensations always in the world  
Creating views using speculative logic  
They speak of a duality: falsehood and truth

*Na heva saccāni bahuni nānā  
Aññatra saññāya niccāni loke,  
Takkañca ditthisu kapappayitvā  
Saccam musāti dvayadhammāhu*

In the *Alagaddupama Sutta* the Buddha points out that the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*) is only a solution to a problem, and not a truth to be believed. It is compared to a boat used to cross over the river. It is not to be carried away after crossing the river, but left behind for others to use. Therefore, the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*) is not a dogma to be believed on blind faith, but only a solution to a problem, which can be used by anyone to solve one's problem. The Buddha takes a pragmatic point of view regarding truth.

About The Four-fold Supernormal Reality, the Buddha states:

- (1) **The first truth** is not to be believed, but **to be comprehended** (*pariññeyyam*).
- (2) **The second truth** is not to be believed, but **to be eliminated** (*pahattābbam*).
- (3) **The third truth** is not to be believed, but **to be realized** (*saccikatābbam*).
- (4) **The fourth truth** is not to be believed, but **to be cultivated** (*bhavetābbam*).

## CHAPTER V

### The Fourfold Supernormal Reality (*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni*)

#### The First Reality – suffering, which is to be comprehended

**F**rom the time a baby is born it is suffering, this is why the first thing the infant does after birth is to cry. Inside the womb it was warm and comfortable. Outside it is cold. No one touched it while inside the womb. Now everyone touches. Inside the womb it was not breathing. Now it has to breath. Then it is bombarded with all kinds of lights and terrible noises. This world is almost a hell for the infant.

The infant begins to gradually grow and get used to these new experiences and become a baby that smiles. Soon the baby grows further and becomes a child who can think. This thinking child begins to soon realize its own weakness and insecurity of life and hopes to be secure and strong when grown up. After growing up one begins to realize that the insecurity has become even worse. They have to study, and learn many things, find jobs, get into competitions, deal with difficult people, struggle hard to succeed, and meet many failures and disappointments.

As an adult one struggles to make ends meet, all one's life, till ageing and sickness set in. Things get even worse then. The struggle to survive continues till death.

The first reality that the Buddha pointed to was this **insecurity of life**. Life is insecure because of the impending, unpredictable death that can come to any individual young or old at any age, and at any time. This insecurity is seen very clearly when we look at the animal world. Every animal has to go in search of food to keep on living. While going in search of food it can become the food of another animal. Each animal lives by making other animals their food. Even the herbivorous animals eat plants, which are trying to keep on living. Human beings also attempt to keep living through competition and exploitation. Each person attempts to live at the expense of others. Even in the normal way of earning a living there is competition and exploitation. If the nature of life is such, there is sufficient reason to question the common belief in a loving Creator God.

Even modern existential philosophers have pointed to this insecurity of life that brings about anxiety, worry, fear, and all the kinds of anguish. Out of all the animals in the world it is the human being that is aware of its own existence, and also aware of its unpredictable but certain impending death. Everyone's entire life is devoted to a futile struggle to avoid this unavoidable death. Everyone celebrates births and laments and moans about death. They fail to realize that birth and death are the two ends of the same continuum called life. They live their lives as if they were going to live forever. Death is certain and life is uncertain. This is the insecurity of life.

All religions that hope to receive eternal life and eternal happiness in Heaven after death are ultimately attempting to solve this same **problem of existence**. This pursuit of Heaven, which can be verified only after death, is based on the assumption that death is the opposite of life and not a part of life. Some have pointed out, however, that birth and death are merely the two ends of the same stick called life. This means death is a part of life and not the opposite of life.

Mankind has from the beginning of history made an effort to remain alive without dying, despite the obvious fact of death. This struggle to exist is an impossible struggle. It is not only futile, it is also painful, and it is also based on the **delusion of eternal existence**.

A common attempt to escape from this **insecurity of life** is to forget about death, and to devote one's life to enjoying the pleasures of life. We even think that it is pessimistic to think of death. We try to hide from the fact of death in many ways, and attempt to carry on life, enjoying the pleasures of the senses. Some people do not like to keep a dead body in their home. They keep it in a special place hidden from the public. They even try to prevent children from looking at a dead body. They also try to stop children speak about death. It is only recently that people have begun to speak about death, or even write books on death. It was quite recently that Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote her book on *Death and Dying*, where she describes five stages of grief:

1. **Denial** — because of the difficulty in facing a loss, the first reaction is Denial. The person tries to shut out the reality or magnitude of the situation, and develops a false reality that is preferable.
2. **Anger** — “Why me? It's not fair!”; “How can this happen to me?”; “Who is to blame?” At the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue, and therefore becomes angry. Misplaced feelings of rage appear. Anger can manifest itself in different ways such as: anger with themselves, with others, and especially with close ones. It is important to remain nonjudgmental when dealing with such a person.

3. **Bargaining** — "I'll do anything for a few more years..." or "I will give my life savings if..." At the third stage a hope arises that the individual can somehow undo or avoid the cause of grief. Psychologically, the individual is saying, "I understand I will die, but if I could just do something to buy more time..." People facing a less serious trauma can bargain. For example: "Can we still be friends?" when facing a break-up. Bargaining rarely provides a sustainable solution, especially if it is a matter of life or death.
4. **Depression** — During the fourth stage, the grieving person begins to understand the certainty of death. "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point?"; because of this, the individual may become silent, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and being sullen and gloomy. This process allows the grieving person to disconnect from things of love and affection, possibly in an attempt to avoid further trauma. It is a kind of acceptance with emotional attachment. It is natural to feel sadness, regret, fear, and uncertainty when going through this stage. Feeling those emotions shows that the person has begun to accept the situation. Often times, this is the ideal path to take, to find closure and make their way to the fifth step, Acceptance.
5. **Acceptance** — In this last stage, individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality or inevitable future. "It's going to be okay." "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it." This stage varies according to the person's situation. This typically comes with a calm, retrospective view for the individual, and a stable mindset.

Kübler-Ross originally developed this model based on her observations of people suffering from terminal illnesses.

She later expanded her theory to apply to any form of catastrophic personal loss, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or income, major rejection, the end of a relationship or divorce, drug addiction, incarceration, the onset of a disease or chronic illness, an infertility diagnosis, as well as many tragedies and disasters (and even minor losses).

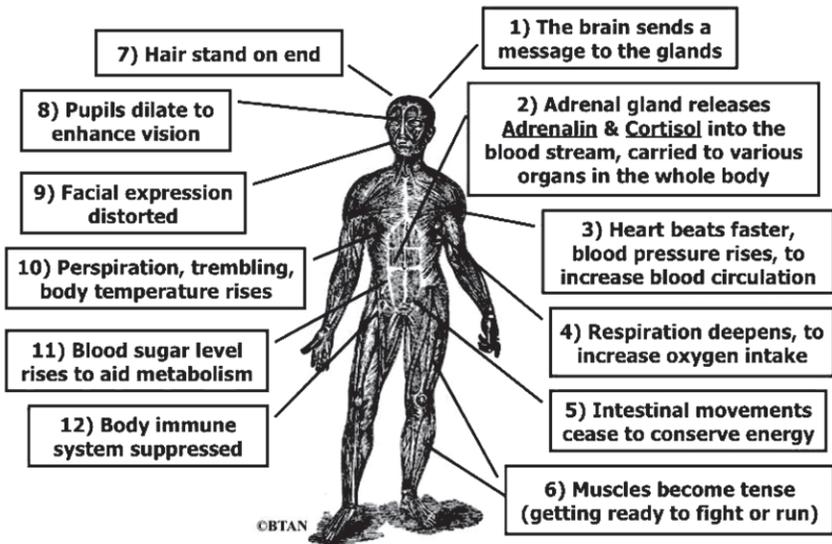
Supporting her theory, many (both sufferers and therapists) have reported the usefulness of the Kübler-Ross Model in a wide variety of situations where people were experiencing a significant loss. The application of the theory is intended to help the sufferer to fully resolve each stage, then help them transit to the next – at the appropriate time – rather than getting stuck in a particular phase or continually bouncing around from one unresolved phase to another.

It was also quite recently that Hans Selye began to write about stress and stress management. The stress of life was presented by Hans Selye as the **General Adaptation Syndrome**, which consisted of three stages:

- (1) Alarm reaction = Grief (*sōka*), Lamentation (*paridēva*)
- (2) Stage of resistance = Pain (*dukkha*), Distress (*domanassa*)
- (3) Stage of exhaustion = Exhaustion (*upāyāsa*)

It is wonderful to note that the Buddha described the same stages in the **General Adaptation Syndrome** in the form of **grief** (*sōka*), **lamentation** (*paridēva*), **pain** (*dukkha*), **distress** (*domanassa*), and **exhaustion** (*upāyāsa*).

## The Fight or Flight Reaction



Stress is understood today as a complete disturbance of the body as well as mind where the body begins to change behaviour from normal to an abnormal state, which if continued too long makes the body sick leading ultimately even to death. This disturbance goes through the three stages as indicated above.

The Buddha explains further how this emotional reaction occurs:

- (1) Meeting the unpleasant (*appiyehi sampayogo*)
- (2) Parting from the pleasant (*piyehi vippayogo*)
- (3) Frustration or failure to gratify desires (*yampiccaṇ nabalabati tampi dukkhaṇ*).

The Buddha explains further the insecurity of life as:

Birth (*jāti*)

Ageing

Ageing (*jarā*)

Birth ----- Death

Death (*marana*)

It is important to note that the *Bodhisatta* who became the Buddha renounced his princely life and became an ascetic to solve this same problem of existence, which he came to recognize when he saw an old man, sick man and a dead corpse.

The *Bodhisatta* set out to solve the problem, not by seeking help in supernatural powers, or hoping to extend life to eternity. His method was to solve the problem using natural human intelligence. He wanted to solve it by understanding the problem and its cause, and to solve it by removing the cause. He also realized that he had to find the way to remove the cause of the problem.

The **Buddha** did solve the problem finally by *stopping this futile and painful emotional struggle to exist* on realizing that *existence is a delusion*, which normal people are suffering from. He saw that *the human being needs to awaken* from this *dream of existence*. He discovered the *way to awaken* from this dream and showed the world the way.

## The Second Reality – the cause of suffering, which is to be eliminated

We have already recognized that **suffering** is expressed as **grief, lamentation, pain, distress and exhaustion**. This suffering was experienced due to **meeting** the unpleasant **birth, aging, sickness, and death**; parting from the pleasant **youth, health, and life**; and the inability to obtain what we desire, which is **permanent youth, permanent health, and permanent life** of the body.

What then is the **cause** of this **suffering**? Is it because we have a “**self**” that grows **old**, falls **sick**, and **dies**?

What is the “**self**” that really grows **old**, falls **sick** and **dies**?

Is it the **body** that is the “**self**” that grows, **old**, falls **sick** and **dies**?

How did this **body** become the “**self**” that grows, **old**, falls **sick** and **dies**?

Because I **personalized** the body, thinking “**this body is mine**,” it is my “**self**” (*upādāna*).

If I did **not personalize** the body, this body will “**not be me**.”

Then the **ageing**, **sickness**, and **death** of the **body** would **not be my suffering**.

The **body** is a **collection of feelings**, **sensations**, **mental constructs**, and **perceptions**.

It is important to understand that the personalized constituents of perception are the foundation of the insecurity of life (*sankittena pancupādānakkhandā dukkhā*). In other words, it is the notion of “**self**” (*sakkaya ditthi and māna*). The ageing, sickness, and death become a suffering only because it is connected to the self, and not otherwise. 2. Suffering also occurs when the Self is in emotional relationship with the world in the form of lust, hate, fear, and worry. 3. Suffering also arises due to insatiable desire for material gains, variety, sensual pleasure, fame, power, conflict with others, comparison with others, etc that cause suffering.

If suffering was the sense of self produced by **personalization** of the **impersonal emotional reaction** together with the **cognitive process of perception**, the **blind emotions** that personalize the impersonal processes are the **cause of suffering**.

Therefore, it becomes easy to recognize that the root of suffering is the **emotion**. This emotion is the cause of suffering pointed out by the Buddha. The common translation of the Pali term *tanhā* as **craving** does not convey this meaning. This is why we translate *tanhā* as **emotion**.

Emotion is the **reaction of the organism to feelings** that are pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. It is when the environment **stimulates the senses that** these feelings arise. The data received through the five senses are carried to the **brain where thinking occurs**, resulting in the **interpretation** of circumstances. This interpretation results in the **arousal of emotions**. The emotions aroused depend on the interpretation.

This emotional arousal creates a **subjective feeling of “self”** and an **objective feeling of “other,”** and an **emotional relationship** occurs between the “self” and the “other.” This emotional relationship creates an **emotional bond of existence** in relationship. This starts the **struggle to keep on existing forever, quite ignorant of the futility and painfulness** of the struggle. This **blind desire** for existence clashes with the **reality of non-existence**, resulting in **suffering**.

It is the **blind struggle for existence** (*bhava-tanhā*) that is the cause of suffering. **Only a struggle continues** but there is **no real existence**. What exists is only an **emotional delusion of existence**.

**Blind Emotions** (*tanhā*) are of three types:

- (1) Desire for pleasant sensations (*lobha*) – (*kāma-tanhā*)
- (2) Hatred of unpleasant sensations (*dosa*) – (*vibhava-tanhā*)
- (3) The notion of existence of neutral sensations (*moha*) – (*bhava-tanhā*).

The emotional reaction **dichotomizes** the experience into two distinct parts: the **subjective** and the **objective**. The subjective is **personalized as “mine,”** the **objective is alienated** and regarded as

part of an **external world**. The subjective is personalized as “This is mine, this is me, this is I, and this is **myself**” (*etam mama, eso’hamasmi, eso me attāti*). This brings about the concept “**I**,” that **becomes the “self.”** But this “self” has to be an **existing entity**. Then the question arises, “**what entity** do we refer to as the “I” or “self?” Then it is the **body that occupies space and time** that is identified as the “self.” It is also the **body that perceives an object**, and reacts emotionally to it. The **body** then becomes the “self” (*sakkāya–ditthi*). It is the **body** that other people can see as “me,” and call my **name**, and even take the **photograph as the image of “me”**.

To personalize the body is to personalize the cognitive and affective processes, which begins quite unconsciously and this begins the **suffering and insecurity of life**. In short, the personalization of the process of perception is suffering (*sankhittena pañcupādānakkhandhādukkā*).

When the body has become the “self,” the “self” (*atta*) occupies **space and time** and exists. If it occupies time it has a **past, present, and future**.

Then the **past** of the body is the **birth** (*jāti*) of the body, the **future** of the body is the **death** (*marana*) of the body, and the present of the body is **ageing** (*jarā*) of the body. This means “**I**” am **born, age, and die**. In other words, when I come into **existence**, I **suffer**. I **suffer** because I come into **existence**. In other words, to exist is to **suffer**. When I **realize**, however, that **I do not really exist** all **suffering comes to an end**.

### **The Third Reality – realization of the end of suffering**

If suffering **began unconsciously**, it can **end** only by **becoming conscious** of the process of cognition and affection. That is by **becoming conscious of the Antecedental Concurrence**

(*paticca samuppāda*). The process of cognition and affection creates the “world” and the “self.” This “world” and the “self” are unstable. What is unstable is insecure. What is insecure is not as I want. What is not as I want is not under my power. What is not under my power is not mine. What is not mine cannot be me. What cannot be me cannot be my self. “What is not mine, is not me, not my self” (*netam mama, neso’hamasmi, neso me attāti*). What is not mine should be discarded.

This realization brings about the paradigm shift from existence to experience, which results in **dispassion**. Dispassion results in **emancipation** or **freedom from suffering** (*vimutti*). This results in the **imperturbable serenity** of mind (*Nibbāna*).

When the cognitive and affective processes are fully comprehended and the paradigm shift has occurred both intellectually as well as emotionally, **suffering comes to an end**.

This is **eradication** of the **delusion of self**, or **Awakening** from the **Dream of Existence**.

This means, the **emotional reaction** was the cause of suffering. The way to end suffering was the **removal of the cause**. The way to remove the **emotional reaction** was to **change** the way we interpret our circumstances. How do we change this **cognitive interpretation of circumstances**? It is to change from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. **Existential thinking** carries a subjective “I” and an **objective “other”** resulting in an **emotional relationship** between the “I” and the “other,” ending in **suffering**. The solution is a **paradigm shift** from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. **Experiential thinking** is to realize that there is **no real subject or object** but only an **impersonal experience**.

## The Fourth Reality – developing the Supernormal Eight-fold Way

This is the **medial path** between **expressing** the emotions and **suppressing** or **repressing** the emotions. Every emotional arousal involves a disturbance of the body and mind. The body becomes tensed and uncomfortable while the mind is unhappy. It is to overcome this discomfort and unhappiness that we unconsciously begin to release the tension in action to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated or to run away from what is feared. What the Buddha points out is that **it is possible to learn to consciously relax the tension, instead of unconsciously releasing the tension in action.** This is the **medial way** that eliminates the discomfort and unhappiness **without suppression or repression.** This avoids the **two extremes of expression and suppression** by means of the **medial path of relaxation of body and calmness of mind.**

This medial path begins with the proper **understanding of the problem and its solution** which is the **Harmonious Perspective.** Having understood the need for the elimination of emotions through the Harmonious Perspective one begins a reorientation of one's life by **changing the goal of life to tranquility of mind.** This results in calmness of behaviour, expressed in speech, actions and life style. Having done so, one **begins to purify the mind** through the **Harmonious Exercise,** which ends in beginning to tread the Seven Steps to Awakening. This **results in the paradigm shift that awakens one from the dream of existence.** Thus **the mind** is liberated (*vimutti*) from all emotional disturbances and suffering, resulting in the **imperturbable serenity, NIBBĀNA.** This medial path, therefore, is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way.**

The far reaching need to focus on the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality** (*Cattari Ariya Saccāni*) is very clearly pointed out in the *Sabbasava Sutta*:

“The ordinary person uneducated in the Dhamma thinks, ‘Did I exist in the past? Did I not exist in the past? In what form did I exist in the past? From what form to what form did I change in the past? Will I exist in the future? Will I not exist in the future? In what form will I exist in the future? From what form to what form will I change in the future? Do I exist now? In what form do I exist now? From what form did I come to this form? To what form will I go from this form? By thinking in this way, one arrives at one of six views:

- (1) I have a “self.”
- (2) I have no “self.”
- (3) I perceive a “self” with “Self.”
- (4) I perceive “not self” with “Self.”
- (5) I perceive “Self” with “not self.”
- (6) It is this “self” of mine that thinks, feels, speaks, acts, and experiences the consequences of good and bad acts. This “self” of mine is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, it will endure as long as eternity.

This set of speculative views is called the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the contortion of views, the vacillation of views, the fetter of views. Fettered by this fetter of views, the uneducated ordinary person is not freed from birth, ageing, death, grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion. He is not freed from suffering I say.

The supernatural individual who is well educated and skilled in the Dhamma and discipline understands how to think, what to think, and what not to think, and so he thinks:

- (1) This is suffering
- (2) This is the cause of suffering
- (3) This is the cessation of suffering
- (4) This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

When he begins to think wisely in this way, three fetters are broken in him:

- (1) Personality perspective (*sakkāya ditthi*)
- (2) Cognitive dissonance (*vicikicchā*)
- (3) Heteronomous morality (*silabbata parāmāsa*).

The modern traditional way of explaining the **Antecedental Concurrence** (*paticca samuppāda*) is based on the notion of “**karma and rebirth,**” and it appears to be an explanation of **how rebirth takes place, and how it can be stopped.** This is because the **main problem** for the modern day Buddhist is: “**How can we stop this process of rebirth?**” In other words, **rebirth** is the problem. **Rebirth is suffering and end of rebirth is the end of suffering.** Thus it is claimed that **Nirvana is the stopping of rebirth.**

The fact that this is not the problem is indicated in the following quotation from the Buddha:

Numerous lives in *saṃsāra*,  
I ran in pursuit of the Creator;

*Aneka jāti saṃsāram –  
sandhāvissam anibbisam*

And never did I ever meet him,  
So painful is repeated birth.

*Gaha kārakam gavesanto –  
dukkhā jāti punappunam.*

O! Creator now I saw you,  
No more will you create again;

*Gaha kāraka diṭṭho’ si –  
puna geham na kāhasi*

Your supports are all destroyed,  
Your structure is fully dismantled;

*Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā –  
gaha kūtāṃ visaṅkhitāṃ*

My mind has stopped creating  
the emotional urge has ceased.

*Visaṅkhāra gatāṃ cittāṃ –  
taṇhānaṃ khayāṃ ajjhagā.*

(*Dhammapada* verses 153 & 154)

The first verse is a description of his experience before awakening from the **dream of existence**. He was thinking in an **existential** way, searching for the Creator. Then he got into **experiential thinking** and saw how his own mental process of perception was the creator of the world. In other words, he saw the **Antecedental Concurrence** (*paticca samuppāda*). When he saw from this different angle of vision, he was free from all suffering. This was the **paradigm shift**.

## CHAPTER VI

### Life is an Unforeseen Accident of Nature

#### Beginning of life

**F**rom a modern scientific point of view, what we call **life** is only an **unconscious electro-chemical activity** that begins due to the presence of the necessary conditions, and ends due to the absence of the necessary conditions. Each necessary condition is also dependent on other necessary conditions without an ultimate beginning. This dynamic process of electrochemical activity follows the **natural law of determinism**, which means that every activity is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions.

Life began when a special kind of molecule came into being due to presence of the necessary conditions. This molecule had a special ability to absorb atoms from the surroundings and produce molecules of its own kind. This **self-replicating molecule** was not the product of a Supernatural Creator either God or Devil. It came into being only due to the presence of the necessary conditions.

This means, that the electrochemical process called **life** began automatically, based on the natural law of determinism. New molecules thus formed, however, began to break down when some necessary conditions were absent. Therefore, two processes continued at the same time: a building up process (anabolism) and a breaking down process (catabolism), collectively known as “metabolism.” When the building up process was faster than the breaking down process, the net result was growth. When the breaking down process

was faster than the building up process, the net result was decay, leading ultimately to death. The continuity of these two processes of growth and decay, is what we call **life**. It was this process of growth and decay that appeared to Charles Darwin as an unconscious **struggle for existence**.

As conditions in the environment changed, however, the environment itself likewise changed, and was no longer favourable for this struggle to continue. Though most molecules were destroyed, a few molecules somehow were able to survive at least for some time, despite the hardships. This survival became possible only through an adaptation to the changing environment, in some way. This was what made Darwin speak of the **survival of the fittest**, though it was only a temporary survival, because every integration was subject to disintegration when even one necessary condition was absent. All these facts however boil down to one single fact that this unconscious struggle was a **mission impossible**. It was a struggle to exist where **existence was not possible**, because life is only a **dynamic process of activity**, rather than a **static "existence."** Existence is a **static concept** in a **dynamic reality**.

Among the early scientific theories of how the first self-replicating molecule came into existence was the "primordial soup," where simple molecules mixed together in a broth that was regularly energised by ultraviolet light and electric storms. Scientists have long believed RNA molecules were more likely to be the origin of life than DNA. Now they think there must have been a simpler molecule that spawned RNA.

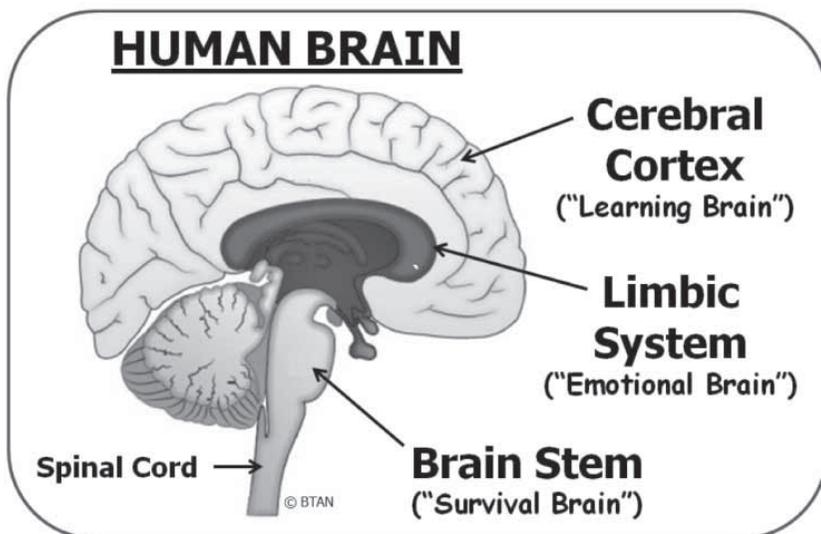
This **unconscious chemical activity** called **life**, though it started with one self-replicating molecule, began to produce several molecules of the same kind, and each new molecule began to create a series of other molecules, and many such series or chains of molecules came into being. Then these molecules began to combine to form cells, and cells combined to form tissues, tissues combined to form

organs, organs combined to form systems, and systems combined to form organisms. That was how the molecules evolved to produce organisms such as plants and animals. It was this unconscious electro-chemical activity that developed into what is today called the **biochemical** process of **evolution**. Charles Darwin saw this unconscious biological activity as a struggle for existence. This struggle though unconscious, and not wilfully done, was a **mission impossible**. It was a **futile struggle because real existence** was not a **possibility**. Existence was a **static concept** in a **dynamic reality**. In other words, existence is a **conceptual fallacy** or a **delusion**.

## Evolution of the human brain

When this impossible struggle for existence continued, the environment was not always favourable to this struggle. When the environmental conditions changed, many organisms died but a few were able to survive by adapting to the environmental conditions because the adaptation was some kind of change in the organism, the organisms began to change in structure and function in adapting to environmental conditions. This changing evolutionary process therefore began to develop organisms with differences in structure and function. As a result of this adaptation many different species of organisms evolved, with a variety of structures and functions befitting a variety of environmental conditions. They also began to develop what are called systems, where several organs combined to deal with a problem in the environment. As conditions in the environment became more and more challenging, the systems became correspondingly more and more complex. As systems became complex, they began to develop **cardiovascular systems** that circulated blood, and even **nervous systems** that carried messages like telephone wires. As the nervous systems began to develop more complex structures and functions, it led to the development of a **brain**. The brain began to develop from a primitive structure

called the **brain stem** which regulates basic life functions such as respiration, digestion, blood circulation, and metabolism – these are the autonomous functions that kept the organism alive and healthy.



As conditions in the environment became more and more challenging, the brain gradually began to evolve further and so aid the survival of the species. This resulted in the development of another part of the brain called the **limbic system** that helped in starting an emotional reaction in response to stimulation by the environment. It is this reaction that we now call **emotional arousal**. The Limbic System is the **emotional command center** of the organism, which is responsible for regulating differences in the mood or temper such as calmness and excitement. Within the **Limbic System** is a structure known as the **amygdala**, which is responsible for scanning the environment through the sense organs, to detect signs of potential threats and danger to the organism. When aroused, the Amygdala triggers the **fight or flight response**, to protect the organism from

harm. It is this reaction that is commonly called **stress** today, which if prolonged can develop into the **general adaptation syndrome**, which turns **stress** into distress.

As the brain evolved further, higher forms of organisms such as mammals evolved, with the formation of the **Cerebrum** which contained the **Cerebral Cortex**, or **Neo-cortex** that is responsible for **thinking**. As evolution progressed further the Cerebrum developed into two hemispheres: left and right. Within these two hemispheres of the Cerebral Cortex came four major pairs of lobes: frontal lobes, temporal lobes, occipital lobes, and parietal lobes. In this way the human brain developed with a **Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC)** in the frontal lobes, which equipped the human being with highly advanced and sophisticated cognitive functions such as planning, goal setting, decision making, judgment, reasoning, rationalization and speech.

## **The impersonality of consciousness**

With the development of these special parts of the brain came the activity called **consciousness**. Thus came into being the species of organism called the **Human Being**, the most advanced and sophisticated species that has the most advanced cognitive capacity and functions. It is this species that became aware of an environment called the “**world**,” and also became aware of a “**self**” that exists in the world.

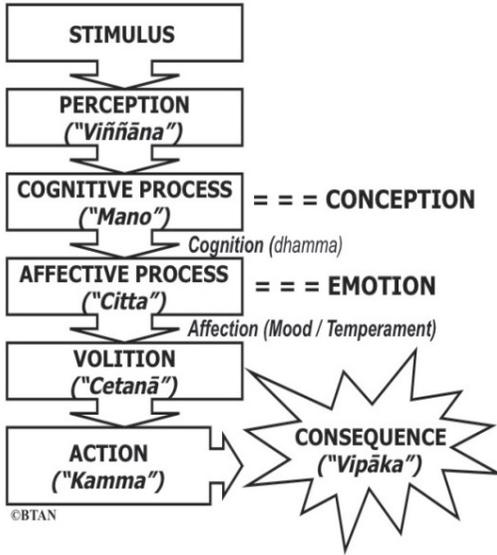
In other words, it is this **impersonal** electrochemical activity called **consciousness** that has given rise to an awareness of an **objective “world,”** and a **subjective “self.”** It is this **consciousness** that has given rise to an **experience**, which has two parts: a **subjective** and an **objective**. The “**world**” that we are aware of is an **objective experience**. The “**self**” that we are aware of is a **subjective experience**. The **self** is the result of **personalization** of the subjective experience. This means the “**self**,” being a product of the subjective process called

consciousness, does not **exist** apart from the process of consciousness. Therefore, it is an appearance rather than a reality. The **world** that we are aware of is also a product of the process of consciousness. It too is a mere appearance. In other words, both the **world** and the **self** are subjective **experiences** rather than objective **existences** that stand apart from **the subjective experience**. In other words, the “**self**” and the “**world**,” though they are supposed to exist, do not really exist by themselves. If this is so, the **self** and the **world** are mere **delusions**.

If this process called Life began as an **unconscious electrochemical activity** of a self-replicating **molecule**, it is this unconscious electrochemical activity that produced the **consciousness**. It is this **consciousness** that produced the **self** and the **world** that we are aware of. If this **self** and the **world** do not **exist** apart from consciousness, it means neither the **self**, nor the **world** has a real objective **existence**.

Although our **thinking faculty** (cognition = *mano*) may be aware of this fallacy, our emotions (**affective** = *citta*) are unaware. It is our blind emotions that desire existence, but our reason is aware that this blind desire clashes with the reality of non-existence. This **clash** between **blind desire** and **reality** leads to **frustration**. It is this frustration that we call **suffering**, or the **insecurity of life**.

## The five constituents of personality (*pañca upādānakkhandā*)



The Pali term *upādāna* is translated here as **personalization** and not as **clinging** or **grasping** because the meaning conveyed by the term *upādāna* is **personalization**, which is to regard something as **mine, me, or myself** (*etaṃmama, eso hamasmi, eso me attati*). The personality is created by personalizing the constituents (*khandā*) as “mine” or “myself.”

The term *khandha* is translated as **constituent** and not as **aggregate** because the term *khandha* refers to the **constituents** that constitutes the **personality**.

An effort has been made here to convey the meaning of the **statement** in relation to the meaning of the **words**.

**Personality** is the product of personalization of the constituents of personality. The constituents of the personality, however, are **not the constituents of the body** as some tend to think. It is the **constituents of the subjective process of perception** that we tend to personalize and regard as “**my self**.” It is the **process of perception** that the Buddha analysed as **mental image** (*rūpa*), **feeling** (*vedanā*), **sensation** (*saññā*), **construction** (*sankhāra*) and

**perception** (*viññāna*). Therefore, it is the constituents of the process of perception, which are personalized to form the personality, or “self.” To explain this further, we need to go into a discussion of what is called an experience.

## What is experience

First let us see ourselves as organisms in an environment. The organism is a biophysical energy system very much like a machine. There are five senses in the body consisting of the eyes, ears, the nose, tongue and the entire body. When this organism is placed in an environment, the environment stimulates the senses, and the organism reacts to the stimulus. **Perception** is the reaction of the organism to stimulation of the senses, by the environment. An **experience** is a product of this process of perception.

The reaction of the organism is a **chain reaction** that takes the form of a **series of reactions**. The first reaction is **perception** such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. What is perceived is carried to the brain by nerves, and the thinking part of the brain, called the cerebral cortex, or neocortex, gives meaning to what is perceived by the senses. This meaning is a **concept** about the **percept**. This giving meaning or **conception** is called **cognition**.

According to the meaning given by the **process of cognition**, an **emotion** is aroused, which is a reaction of the organism to the **cognition**, in the form of a desire, hatred, fear, or worry. According to the emotion aroused, an **action** results: to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, to run away from what is feared, etc. This **action** along with the **emotion** aroused is called *kamma*. Before this **action** (*kamma*) takes place, the human being has the ability to delay this action, to get sufficient time to decide what to do in this given situation, and is able to stop the emotional action or go on with it. It is this decision that is called *cetanā*, which is the real *kamma*. If

the decision is to act emotionally, it becomes a **bad action** (*akusala kamma*), but if the decision is to act rationally, it becomes a **good action** (*kusala kamma*). This rational good action can be performed only by the cognitive process by **interfering** with the **emotional** or **affective** process.

## **Mind, what it is**

What we call the mind is not an entity separate from the body, but an activity of the body. Therefore, this chain reaction, consisting of perception, conception, emotion, and action are such activities of the body, and not separate entities. Although they are activities of the body, there is a tendency to experience these activities as activities of a subjective entity called the **mind** or **self** that exists apart from the body. What is subjectively experienced, is personalized as “mine” or “myself.” What is objectively experienced is regarded as a thing that exists outside. What is commonly regarded as “myself” therefore is not an entity separate from the body, but only an activity of the body.

It is this chain reaction or process of perception, conception, and emotion that we personalize as “mine” or “myself.” This is how we build the concept of “self.” This “self” building process, however, is not purely rational but rather to a great extent emotional.

When one becomes aware of the process of perception through **apperception**, however, one becomes aware of how the process of perception takes place. This means one becomes aware of the **five constituents of the process of perception**. These five constituents in the process of perception have been described by the Buddha as *Pañca Upādāna Khandha*, which means the **five constituents of personality**. The term *khandha* is generally translated as aggregate, which does not carry the necessary meaning, which is constituent. The term *upādāna* (*upa* = inside *ādāna* = taking) is to regard as “mine,” or to **personalize**. because our eyes work like a

movie camera continuously taking a series of pictures, the five stages in the process of perception are a series of activities constituting the process of perception. This is why they are called the five constituents of the Process of Perception. These five constituents are as follows:

- (1) Mental Image (*rūpa*)
- (2) Feeling (*vedanā*)
- (3) Sensation (*saññā*)
- (4) Construction (*sankhāra*)
- (10) Perception (*viññāna*).

In speaking of the sense of sight, the Buddha spoke of the **image** (*rūpa*) perceived first. Then he spoke of the **building blocks** of the image as the **feelings** (*vedanā*) and the **sensations** (*saññā*). Next he spoke of the process of **construction** (*sankhāra*). Finally, he spoke of the **completion** of the five stages in the process as **perception** (*viññāna*) in which we **distinguish** between one object and another and their **relationship**.

It is when these constituents of the process of perception are **personalized** (*upādāna*) that the idea of “self” comes into being. To personalize is to say, “**This is mine.**” All that is personalized, as “mine” becomes the “self.” **Personality** therefore is the product of personalization of the constituents of perception. This personality however is not a rational concept but an emotional feeling.

Take for instance the sense of sight. If we see something, we say “I see,” but where is the “I” that sees? Is it the process of perception that we refer to as “I”? The “I” is a feeling rather than an actual object perceived. If we look for an object, the only object to be seen is the **body** that occupies space and time. This is the meaning of **My Body Perspective** (*sakkaya ditthi*). The process of perception takes the form of the **body**. The body is personalized as, “**this is mine**” or “**I perceive.**” Yet the body is not something we objectively see, other than just the visible hands, legs, abdomen or image in a mirror. The body that we think of is only a mental image constructed in the

mind. The body that we see as “**my self**” is only a mental image, very different from what other people see as “**me**.” This is why when “I” see a picture of “myself” taken by someone, it looks very different from what “I” think “I am.” It is by personalizing the **body** in the form of a **mental image** that the **notion of personality** or “**self**” comes into being.

It is interesting to note that Sigmund Freud divided the personality into three parts: the *id*, the *ego*, and the *super ego*. The *id* referred to the emotions, and the *ego* referred to reason. The *super ego* was the conscience. He found the *id* coming in conflict with the *ego*, and even with the *super ego*. He found it difficult to resolve the conflict between blind emotions and the rational intellect. The emotional *id* could not be eradicated, Freud thought, because they were instincts that were built into the system. Therefore, his partial solution was through sublimation, which was to redirect the energy of the emotions along socially acceptable channels. He also spoke of the discontent of civilization, because to be civilized is to consciously suppress lust and hate, which is to experience frustration and disappointment.

The Buddha was aware of this conflict, although he did not use the same terminology. It is important to know that the Buddha pointed out that the difficulty in resolving the conflict was due to **personalization of the *id*, *ego*, and *super ego***. He spoke of **four kinds of personalization** (*upādāna*).

- (1) personalization of **emotion** (*kāma upādāna*) = *id*
- (2) personalization of **reasoning** (*ditthi upādāna*) = *ego*
- (3) personalization of **morals** (*sīlabbata upādāna*) = *super ego*
- (4) personalization of **notion of self** (*attavāda upādāna*) = *personality*.

The Buddha pointed out that the conflict can be resolved only by undoing the personalization (*anupādāna*) of the emotion (*id*), the reasoning (*ego*), and the morals (*super ego*). The Buddha took these activities to be impersonal processes dependent on conditions, while Freud took them to be parts of the personality. It is due to personalization that the resolution of the conflict became difficult for Freud. It was by un-personalization (*anupādāna*) that the Buddha was able to resolve the conflict. It is important to distinguish this **un-personalization** from the depersonalization disorder or neurosis referred to in psychiatry.

## CHAPTER VII

### Wonderful achievement of the Buddha Awakening from the dream of existence

#### The beginning

This brings us to a discussion of how the Buddha awakened from the dream of existence. He started as a *Bodhisatta* learning to sacrifice everything he thought he had, including his own body and mind. In one lifetime he saw a tigress trying to eat her cubs out of hunger. He sacrificed his own body to the tigress and thus saved the cubs. Another time he was born



as a king and he sacrificed all his property, his palace, his children and even his wife, and went into the forest to live there. Finally, he was born in the Heaven of Contentment (*Tusita*) as the King of that Heaven (*Santutthi*) waiting till the time was ready for him to become a Buddha.

When the time was ripe, he was born into a royal family as Prince Siddhatta. From the time he was born he was pampered by the attendants till one day during a ploughing ceremony he experienced the first solitude, when the attendants were busy attending to the ceremony. That was the time he entered the first ecstasy (*jhāna*) in this new life as a Prince. We have explained what an ecstasy was. It

was standing out of the sensual world. When he reached the age of 16 his father got him married against his wishes. After his marriage he was not interested in the common sensual pleasures of married life. So he lived married for 13 years till the age of 29, till he decided to renounce the worldly (mundane) life and enter a spiritual (supra mundane) life.

## The Great Renunciation

His decision to renounce occurred when he saw an old man, a sick man and a corpse. He became aware of the realities of life. He realized that every plant, animal, and human being that is born must grow old, fall sick and die. Everything in the world, even inanimate things, must grow old, fall sick, and die. Attachment to them is the cause of all suffering. Normal human beings, though aware of this fact, still keep seeking these evanescent things and suffer. When he saw a renounced person, he thought: "Here is one man who does the opposite. That is the right thing to do. I will do the same." So he gave up his princely life, his loving father and his loving aunt who mothered him, his beautiful wife, his newly born child, and even his future as a king or emperor, and withdrew into the forest, to live an ascetic life, learning meditation from well-known meditation masters of the time. Before he left the family, however, he did produce a child, because he didn't want to leave the wife alone and unhappy.

His main purpose in life was to **conquer the blind emotions** and solve **the problem of existence**, which is **death or mortality** itself. We are caught up in a trap, where blind emotions are carrying us unconsciously towards an inevitable, unpredictable death that is hanging over our head, like the sword of Damocles, liable to fall and crush us into pieces at any time. It is this same problem that all religions (monotheistic, polytheistic or humanistic) are attempting to solve in their own way. Most religions appear to be escapes from reality into a fantasy, but Prince Siddhatta gave up the theistic

approach and took up a humanistic approach to solve the problem, using human intelligence. He saw that the obstacle that prevented him from using the human intelligence was human emotions. So he removed all emotional disturbances from his system by learning to practice tranquility by letting go. This helped him to change his thinking.

## **Asceticism**

He practiced tranquility to the highest level possible. At first he learned this from his meditation teachers but he could not reach the highest point, because the teachers he depended on had not reached the highest point. So he gave up the teachers and decided to practice asceticism with five ascetics. He even stopped eating till he became like a skeleton. Then he tried to stop breathing. This resulted in his fainting, when some thought he was dead. When, however, he woke up, he thought: “All these days I have been trying to learn from others and do what other people did. Now I will go my own way.”

He started to eat to strengthen his body and mind. He recalled how as a child he had entered the first ecstasy automatically by letting go of everything. He thought: “This is what I will do now. I will let go, give up everything.” This way he gave up all the five hindrances, lust, hate, lethargy, worry, and indecision. This resulted in the appearance of the five constituents of ecstasy:

## **Entering Ecstasy**

- (1) The first ecstasy: with inquiry, inference, contentment, comfort, and stillness of mind.
- (2) Then the second ecstasy: with contentment, comfort, and stillness of mind.

- (3) Then the third ecstasy: with comfort and stillness of mind.
- (4) Then the fourth ecstasy: with stillness and apperception.

Then he began to enter the cognitive ecstasies:

- (5) The realm of infinite space
- (6) The realm of infinite perception
- (7) The realm of nothingness
- (8) The realm of neither sensation nor no sensation
- (9) The cessation of sensation and feeling.

1 <sup>st</sup> <i>Jhāna</i>	Inference ( <i>vitakka</i> )	Inquiry ( <i>vicāra</i> )	Rapture ( <i>pīti</i> )	Comfort ( <i>sukha</i> )	Stillness of Mind ( <i>ekaggatā</i> )
2 <sup>nd</sup> <i>Jhāna</i>	→	→	Rapture ( <i>pīti</i> )	Comfort ( <i>sukha</i> )	Stillness of Mind ( <i>ekaggatā</i> )
3 <sup>rd</sup> <i>Jhāna</i>			↓	Comfort ( <i>sukha</i> )	Stillness of Mind ( <i>ekaggatā</i> )
4 <sup>th</sup> <i>Jhāna</i>				↓	Stillness of Mind ( <i>ekaggatā</i> )

This last state was the absolute unconsciousness (*avijjā*), where the consciousness was absent though the body was alive. It was when he woke up from this state that he began to become aware of the mental process by which the “world” that we are aware of, the “self” we are aware of, and the “suffering” we are aware of, came into being.

All this came out of the process of perception, conception, cognition, and affection. These psychophysical activities did not arise due to the commandments of a supernatural Creator, but only because of the presence of the necessary conditions.

This experience made him realize that the mind is not an entity separate from the body, but an activity of the body, which when perceived subjectively appears to be mental and when observed objectively appears to be physical. In other words, experience is dichotomized into a subjective and an objective. He also saw that the cognitive process creates the objective “world,” and the affective emotional process creates the subjective “self,” and the resulting suffering.

## How the objective process creates the world

Environmental activities stimulate the five sense organs in the following manner:

We start with the assumption: **organism (A)** is in the **environment (B)**. Yet the organism and environment are products of the process of perception, which needs A & B to start with. The organism contains the **body**, the **five senses**, and the **brain**.

- **EYE:** is stimulated by light in the environment coming in the form of electromagnetic waves
- **EAR:** is stimulated by sound waves coming in the form of movements in the air
- **NOSE:** is stimulated by odorant molecules touching the olfactory bulb inside the nose
- **TONGUE:** is stimulated by flavour molecules touching gustatory receptors in the taste buds
- **BODY:** is stimulated by Touch: as pressure, temperature, and vibration of tactile objects

If we consider the sense of sight, what is perceived by the eye is only a visual image (*rūpa*). The image is produced when the body reacts to the stimulus and so experiences a feeling (*vedanā*) and a sensation (*saññā*). Sensation (*saññā*) refers to the “colour,” and feeling (*vedanā*) refers to the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the colour.

In the case of hearing, sensation (*saññā*) refers to the nature of the sound, and feeling (*vedanā*) refers to the pleasantness or unpleasantness felt in the ear.

Sensation (*saññā*) is always accompanied by feeling (*vedanā*) and so they are inseparable. Sensation and the feeling are reactions of the organism to stimulation by the environment.

Sensation and feeling become the raw material used for the construction of mental images by the thinking part of the brain.

This construction process (*sankhāra*) is a mental activity. The result of this activity of construction is the formation of the mental images, which are perceived (*viññāna*). From moment to moment, every mental image (*rūpa*) that arises fades away to be replaced by another mental image that arises. This happens in a continuous manner, making us feel the continuity to be seen as a static existence.

Since a multiplicity of objects are present in a complex mental image, a **differentiation** between one object and another becomes necessary in the process of **perception** (*viññāna*).

All sense organs continuously feed mental images to the brain and the brain makes use of these images and forms concepts about the environment. In the formation of concepts, the brain uses past experiences. In doing so it puts images into categories (*pañceti*), and that is how we recognize and identify objects. We react emotionally according to the way we identify objects.

It is this reaction that bifurcates the experience perceived into a subjective and objective. The subjective is personalized and the objective is alienated, creating a **self** and an **other**.

This is how we create the **world** that we are aware of and the **self** that lives in the world. Then an **emotional relationship** develops between the self and the world. This relationship begins the **suffering** due to meeting and parting.

When we examine the formula laid down by the Buddha as the Concurrence of Antecedents, we find that it begins with **unconsciousness**. This means the mental process of creation of objects begins from a state of unconsciousness or insentience as experienced by the Buddha. The Building process begins with **feeling and sensation** (*vedanā and saññā*). As one goes through the cognitive ecstasies backwards, one comes to the fourth affective ecstasy and from there to (the third affective ecstasy where **breathing** begins. It is only at the first ecstasy that **conceptual thinking** (*vitakka vicāra*) begins. The Buddha pointed out that construction is of three kinds:

- (1) Mental Construction (*Citta Saṅkhāra*): feeling and sensation (*vedanā-saññā*)
- (2) Verbal Construction (*Vacī Saṅkhāra*): inquiry and inference (*vitakka-vicāra*)
- (3) Physical Construction (*Kāya Saṅkhāra*): breathing in and out (*assāsa-passāsa*).

Objects are constructed by these three processes. The feelings and sensations are like the bricks that build a wall. The object is built using questions and answers such as: What is this? This is a tree, or this is a dog, or this is a man. The physical energy for this activity of construction is obtained from the breathing. The construction ends up in **perception** (*viññāna*).

What is perceived is the object in the form of an **image** (*rupa*), and identification **name** (*nāma*) that identifies the object. In this same way the five senses go into action individually and collectively to form images with identities. Whatever information is obtained through sensory perception is transferred to the brain where thinking occurs to give meaning to what is perceived. Thus the **sensory world** (*salāyatana*) is created. With the creation of the sensory world, the process of **cognition** (*phassa*) is completed.

## How the affective process creates the “self”

From here on the affective process begins. Once the cognitive process gets started, the feelings become ready for action. The three kinds of **feelings** (*vedanā*): pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, become targets to which **emotional reactions** (*tanhā*) are fired. At the beginning during the cognitive process the experience was only objective and single. Now with the coming of the **emotional reaction** (*tanhā*), the experience of perception is bifurcated into a **subjective** and an **objective**. The object perceived becomes the objective, and the emotional reaction and the process of perception becomes the subjective.

When this happens the subjective part is **personalized** (*upādāna*) as “mine.” What is personalized turns into the personality, the “self.” The personality is created by the **emotional reaction** (*tanhā*). The object is externalized as “other.” When the question arises: What are we referring to as the “self?” The only answer is the **body** that occupies space and time. Thus begins the “**I am the body’ perspective**” (*sakkāya ditthi*).

When the body has become the “self,” I have a past, present and future. The past of the body is **birth**, the future of the body is **death**. The present of the body is **ageing**. With this comes meeting the unpleasant **ageing, sickness, and death**, and parting from the pleasant

youth, health, and life. Not getting what one desires: eternal youth, health, life. This ends with grief, lamentation, pain, distress, and exhaustion.

## Awakening

Here ends the **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*). When this is reflected on, one begins to see **how things come to be**. This way of thinking is called **thinking genetically** (*yoniso manasikāra*). This thinking brings about the **paradigm shift from personal existence to impersonal experience**. This results in **awakening from the dream of existence, ending in the imperturbable serenity – NIRVĀNA**.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A symbolic presentation of Buddha

**H**induism has not totally rejected Buddhism. It has absorbed Buddhism while preserving their favourite dogmas. It was Shankaracharya who became a Buddhist monk to study Buddhism and then gave up robes to write commentaries to the Vedas using Buddhist concepts. This was how he obtained the name **The Buddhist in disguise** (*Pracchanna Bhauddha*) by the Brahmins themselves. The other Brahmin Patanjali who wrote the Patanjali Yoga Sashtra formulated his meditation system in imitation of the Supernormal Eightfold Path of the Buddha and called it the path taught by the Rishi Kapila who lived before the Buddha. Yet Kapila is believed to have taught the Sankya Yoga Sastra and not the Atthanga Yoga of Patanjali.

It is interesting to discuss the relationship between Buddhism and the Three Murthi: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. These three names do not refer to three gods. They are three forms of one God: Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. These three forms of God are recognized even in Christianity. It is generally believed by Hindus that the Buddha is an incarnation of Vishnu, which means that the Buddha is a preserver. But the fact, however, is that it is more to the point if we consider the Buddha to be an incarnation of Siva. This is because the Buddha is a destroyer rather than a preserver. Why?

According to the Buddha, the world is a delusion (*māyā*). The Buddha is supposed to have destroyed this delusion.

Image is like a picture	<i>Pena pindupaman rupan</i>
Feeling is like a bubble	<i>Vedanā bubulupaman</i>
Sensation is an illusion	<i>Maricikupamā saññā</i>
Construction like an onion	<i>Sankārā kadalupaman</i>
Perception is a delusion	<i>Māyupamanca viññānan</i>
So said the kin of Sun	<i>Desitan dicca bandunam</i>

(*Dhammapada*)

The reason is that according to the original Buddhist way of thinking, the Buddha is the destroyer of the world. He destroyed the world by **Awakening from the Dream of Existence**. The well-known verses already mentioned, makes this point clear:

Numerous lives in *saṃsāra*  
I ran in pursuit of the Creator

*Aneka jāti saṃsāram –  
sandhāvissam anibbisam*

But never did I ever meet him  
So painful is repeated birth

*Gaha kārakam gavesanto –  
dukkhā jāti punappunam.*

Now I see you, Oh Creator  
No more will you create again

*Gaha kāraka diṭṭho' si –  
puna geham na kāhasi*

Destroyed is your foundation  
Dismantled the entire structure

*Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā –  
gaha kūtaṃ viśaṅkhitāṃ*

The mind has stopped creating  
The emotional urge has ceased.

*Viśaṅkhāra gataṃ cittaṃ –  
taṇhānaṃ khayāṃ ajjhagā.*

*(Dhammapada verses 153/154)*

These two verses represent the **paradigm shift** from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. The first verse depicts the **existential paradigm**, and the second verse depicts the **experiential paradigm**. In the existential paradigm the **world** as object and the **self** as subject **exists**. In the experiential paradigm they **do not exist**.

What that means is that the first verse describes his thoughts before his **Awakening from the dream of existence**. The second verse describes his thoughts **after** his **Awakening**. In other words, before his awakening he thought there was an **external Creator** who created the external world, and he searched for him but did not find him. After his awakening he realized that the **Creator was his own mind** and he **stopped the creation** of the world. What that means is that the first verse describes his thoughts **before** his **Awakening from the dream of existence**. This was his **Awakening from the dream of existence** and this was **the way he destroyed the world**.

## Meaning of Shiva

Every person who goes into meditation begins to feel as if one has gone out of one's normal life, and is spending some time on vacation. As one progresses in meditation, the time comes when one begins to feel that the hours of meditation is the real home and the time one is not meditating is the vacation.

Here we begin to experience a paradigm shift. The **time in meditation** is the **paradigm of experience**, and the **time in ordinary life** is the **paradigm of existence**. It is possible to **toggle between the two paradigms**, from time to time, as we mentioned earlier.

The two forms of **Shiva**: **Shiva in meditation**, and **Shiva in dance** depicts these two paradigms. The **Shiva in dance** is the existential paradigm, and **Shiva in meditation** is the experiential paradigm.

It is interesting to find out how this Buddhist concept got into the imagery of Hinduism. The dancing figure of Shiva is standing on an animal and there is a circle of flames around the dancing figure. Seen from a Buddhist perspective, it represents the **Concurrence of antecedents** (*paticca samuppāda*). The animal at the foot is unconsciousness. The circle of flames is the sufferings of normal life.

## Nirvāna (*Nibbāna*)

The Buddha has always stated that **Nirvana** (*Nibbāna*) is the **freedom from the notion of Existence** (*bhava nirodho*)



*Nibbānan*). Nirvana is **not the destruction of an existing object but only a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking**. The emancipator can **toggle** between these **two paradigms** occasionally, but most of the time he or she remains in the **experiential mode** (*Nirodha samāpatti*). Only occasionally, for a purpose like going on the alms round (*pindapāta*), or discussing the Dhamma (*dhammiva katā*) does he or she enter the **existential mode**.

The well-known statement of the Buddha “**Speak on the Dhamma or maintain the Ariya silence** (*dhammiva katā ariyo vā tunhibhāvo*) refers to the same toggle. **The Ariya silence** (*ariyo vā tunhibhāvo*) is really the **experiential mode** (*Nirodha samāpatti*), and discussing the Dhamma is the **existential mode**.

It is interesting to note that modern scientific research refers to a **toggle switch** in the brain called the **Reticular Activating System (RAS)**, which can toggle between the cognitive and affective modes. It is **probably the same RAS** that the **emancipator uses** to toggle between the existential and experiential paradigms.

We have already spoken of the **two forms** of Nirvana:

- (1) *Saupādisesā Nibbāna* = the existential mode
- (2) *Anupādisesā Nibbāna* = the experiential mode

(*Itivuttaka* 44 – p38)

These two terms are defined quite differently in the traditional Theravada school of thought today. It is as follows:

- (1) *Saupadisesa Nibbāna* = Experience of the Buddha or emancipator, while living.
- (2) *Anupadisesa Nibbāna* = Experience of the Buddha or emancipator, after death.

This interpretation of the Theravada school of Buddhism is similar to the Hindu idea of Jeevan mukta and *Videha mukta*.

(1) Jeevan mukta – (*sauvadisesa*).

(2) Videha mukta – (*anupadisesa*).

This clearly indicates that Brahminism and Buddhism have had a very close relationship. Concepts have been exchanged often.

## Shiva Lingam

The most interesting symbol connected with Shiva is the Lingam, which depicts the sexual organs. One may begin to wonder why the Hindus worship the sexual organs, and why the sexual organs symbolize God. Out of all the symbols depicting God the Lingam is given the most prominent place in the Hindu temples. There must be a sensible reason for that.

When examined from a Humanistic Buddhist perspective, a **probable reason comes into play**. The most important person for the Buddhist is the **Buddha**. The Buddha himself has often said, “One who sees me, sees the **Dhamma**.” He has also said, “One who sees the Dhamma sees the *paticca samuppāda*.” The *paticca samuppāda* has been called “*yoniso manasikāra*,” which means, **reflecting on the “womb” or origin**. Even Theistic religions that worship the Creator, worship the originator, which is the **origin**. This means the Hindus that worship the Lingam worship the origin, or **God**, the common symbol that all religions worship. Yet it is a more **humanistic** way of looking at God. This means, **Sex** is not something to be ashamed of, or disrespected. It is something to be honoured and **exalted**. It is, after all, where we all came from, our **mother** and our **father**. Of all sensual pleasures, sex is considered to be the greatest.

In Buddhism, however, we do not worship the Creator, or value existence, instead we **seek release from existence** and **Awaken** from the **Dream** of Existence.

## Conclusion

The system of meditation described in this book in the form of three stages of meditative experience is nothing other than the Supernormal Eightfold Way (*ariya atthāṅgika magga*) divided into three sections.

We have translated the word “*ariya*” as the “Supernormal” because that is the meaning of the term “ariya.” The Buddha used another term *puthujjana* (normal) to emphasise the distinction between normal (*puthujjana*) and supernormal (*ariya*). Modern psychologists use the two terms **normal** and **abnormal** to indicate two levels of consciousness. The Buddha used these terms **normal** and **supernormal** to indicate two other levels of consciousness.

The three stages of meditative experience are nothing other than the well-known three levels of practice: purity of behaviour (*sila*), emotional purity (*samādhi*), intellectual purity (*paññā*). These three stages of practice come under the Supernormal Eightfold Way, the true path of purification.

The first five steps in the Supernormal Eightfold Way cover the purity of behaviour (*sila*). The sixth step covers the emotional purity (*samādhi*). The seventh and eighth steps cover the intellectual purity (*paññā*).

The completion of the Supernormal Eightfold Way ends in a paradigm shift, which is not merely an intellectual transformation but also an emotional and behavioural transformation. In other words, it is a complete change in disposition, character, or personality. A **self-centered** individual is transformed into a **selfless** one.

The emancipated individual is a transformed individual who has broken the ten bonds or fetters. This transformation is a change from an existential mode to an experiential mode. In this process the ten fetters (*samyojana*) are broken. They are as follows:

- (1) Personal body perspective (*sakkāya-ditthi*).
- (2) Cognitive dissonance (*vicikiccā*)
- (3) Heteronomous morality (*silabbata-parāmāsa*)
- (4) Avarice (*kāma-rāga*)
- (5) Aversion (*patigha*)
- (6) Visual lust (*rūpa-rāga*)
- (7) Lust for non-visual being (*arūpa-rāga*)
- (8) Egotism (*māna*)
- (9) Excitement (*uddhacca*)
- (10) Unconsciousness (*avijjā*).

The practice of the first five steps in the Supernormal Eightfold Way helps break the first three fetters. When these are broken the practitioner becomes **one who has entered the stream** (*sotāpanna*). The stream is the Supernormal Eightfold Way that leads to **Nirvana** (*Nibbāna*). Just as a river falls into the ocean, ultimately, one who becomes a stream enterer ultimately enters **Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*), within seven lives. When one enters the stream one has also entered the Supernormal level, at least in terms of behaviour. One does not practice good behaviour only to satisfy others, or to gain some rewards. One behaves well because one has understood the need for good behaviour, especially in consideration for others as well as oneself. This is the meaning of **autonomous morality** (*aparāmatṭaṅ samādhi samvattanikaṅ*), which is the opposite of **heteronomous morality** (*silabbata parāmāsa*).

The practice of the sixth step in the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which is the Harmonious Exercise (*sammā vāyāma*), helps to bring about emotional purity and tranquility (*samādhi*), at least to the level of the first ecstasy (*patamajjhāna*). If this emotional purity

is accompanied by a certain level of intellectual purity (*paññā*), the fourth and fifth fetters (*kāmarāga patigha*) could be diminished to the extent of becoming a **once returner** (*sakadāgāmi*).

The practice of the seventh and eighth steps in the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which are the **Harmonious Attention** and the **Harmonious Equilibrium**, which in other words is the practice of the **Seven Steps to Awakening**, results in the **paradigm shift**, leading to **Awakening** from the “**dream of existence**,” and experiencing the **Imperturbable Serenity – Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*). A person who has entered this state becomes a fully emancipated *Arahat*.

The teaching of the Buddha is a human discovery, and is dealing with a human problem and its solution, through a human technique. This is why it is neither theistic nor atheistic, but humanistic.

The Buddha offers a method of transcending normal human nature. This is why this method is called Supernormal. He deals with the basic problem of human existence, which is the **insecurity of life**. Insecurity is the fear of the ever threatening, impending, unpredictable, but certain death that hangs like the sword of Damocles that is suspended above his head, which can fall at any moment and kill him. Out of all the animals in the world it is the human being who is fully aware of its own existence and also aware of its own death. Yet the normal human being prefers to forget about death and enjoy life thinking: “Eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die.” That is what is commonly called optimism.

Of course some attempt to solve the problem by way of a flight from reality into fantasy. They attempt to step into another world by means of alcohol or hallucinogenic drugs. When the evil consequences of such practices are recognized, however, they try out meditation, hoping it would carry one to another world, which is safer than the drug induced heaven.

Other helpers point to a more traditional and historic one. It is one that has stood the times, though the solution cannot be verified until one dies. It is taken without question, on blind faith. It is based on a **great hope** that after death the believer will have eternal life and eternal happiness in Heaven. The non-believers are condemned unmercifully, to suffer eternal hellfire.

It is this same **problem of existence** that the Buddha set out to solve, but **not** through an escape into fantasy, but through a **psychological paradigm shift** that solves the problem here and now. It is the **Awakening** from the **dream of existence**.

This means the normal human being is not fully awake, but is **dreaming**, or suffering from a delusion, the **delusion of existence**. This was expressed by the Buddha in the words: “All normal human beings are insane” (*sabbe putujjanā ummattakā*). The **only solution** was to **awaken from this dream of existence**.

## Concept of God

The Buddha did have a concept of **God** though the definition of God was not theistic but **humanistic**. For the Buddha, **God** is only a **human concept**. It is the **concept of perfection**, in knowledge, power, and goodness; symbolized in monotheistic religion as omniscience, omnipotence, and omni-benevolence. Knowledge, Power, and Goodness are the **ultimate values** that human beings seek, because they are born **ignorant, powerless**, and with a tendency to **selfishness**, which is evil.

Although these values are attributed to the Creator in monotheistic religion, in humanistic Buddhism, these values are attributed to **the ideal of human perfection**, represented by the Buddha. Humanistic philosophers have always questioned how such a Good Creator could create a world full of suffering and evil, or allow such things to remain in this world. Biblical religions do provide a

reason for this, however, by turning the blame on the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the first humans. Yet that does not answer why there is death for other animals, or even plants and inanimate matter.

Humanistic Buddhists of course do not believe in an all-loving Creator God. Yet Buddhists do have a concept of the Devil who is called the “All-powerful Killer” (*Vasavatti Māra*). The Pali term “*vasavatti*” means “all-powerful,” and “*Māra*” means “killer.” *Māra* represents the Devil, in Buddhism. The Buddha symbolizes goodness, because he is believed to have transcended all evil, and become Truly Divine in mind, though human in body. “God” and “Devil” in Buddhism refers to the “good” and “evil” within human nature. Therefore, Buddha becomes the anthropomorphic God of the Buddhist.

Power is not worshiped in Buddhism. Power belongs to the Devil, rather than to God. The Buddhist worships the Goodness and Wisdom of the Buddha, but not power. This is why the Buddhist takes refuge in the wisdom and goodness of the Buddha. The term “Buddha” refers to man become God (*Brahmabhuto*), which the actualization of the human potential.

Mankind generally seeks Supernatural power to change natural unpleasant circumstances, but the enlightened Buddhist seeks wisdom of the Buddha to change himself. Even biological evolution progressed by **adapting** to the environment, rather than attempting to **change** the environment. In this psychological evolution mankind having comprehended the mistake made by the unconscious life process begins to change the mind to stop this impossible, futile, and painful struggle to exist.

The teaching of the Buddha points out that the normal human being as well as all animals and plants are in conflict with their circumstances. Life itself is in conflict with nature. Life is a struggle to exist in a world that does not allow existence. This struggle is not conscious but unconscious. Though unconscious life does not give up.

It continues the struggle by adapting to the changing environmental conditions. It is this continuation of the struggle to exist that has resulted in the evolution of the human being with a brain to think. It is this human being with the ability to think that is able to realize that life is making a mistake. The mistake can be corrected only when the evolved human being realizes the mistake and learns to stop the unconscious struggle, using the conscious intelligence to control the unconscious emotions. Emotions, however, can be used to stir the mind for the task by instilling fear to keep the practice going without delay.

Religion is how the human being begins to solve this problem by idealizing the human potential and visualizing it as “**God.**” Therefore, **God**, for the Buddhist, is the human **ideal of perfection** that human beings conceive and struggle to realize through the practice of religion. **Religion**, therefore for the Buddhist, is the **human effort** to solve the **problem of existence** (which is death). The human being is able to transcend all human weaknesses (ignorance, powerlessness and the tendency to selfishness). From this Buddhist humanistic perspective, it was man who created God, in his own image, not vice versa.

Buddhists believe that this state of perfection is a **human potential** that is actualized from time to time when the human being becomes an **Awakened One** (a **Buddha**), or **God become** (*Brahmabhuto*). This actualization of the human potential is the union with God, which all religions aspire to accomplish. To unite with God, for the Buddhist, is to become God. Just as a river enters the ocean and loses its identity, so a human being loses his identity in becoming God. This is not the deification of a human being, but the evolution of the human being to a Superhuman Divine level. Such a person who has **realized the ideal of perfection** becomes the **Anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhist.

To become God, however, is also to become fully human, by eliminating the animal nature within, which is the “self-centered emotions.” The difference between the human being and the other animals is mainly in the brain. The human being is at a higher evolutionary level, because of his ability to think and reason out logically. The modern scientific discoveries and technology, which have brought so much comfort and conveniences to mankind is the result of this ability to think. Yet this special ability of the human being is mainly used to gratify human cravings and for destructive purposes like wars and crime.

The human being today is not fully evolved, and he is not fully conscious of the damage he is doing to himself and others, and the world at large. He is obstructing the very peace he is craving for. It is like a baby with unsafe toys or a child with dangerous weapons. The human being is still like the animal that is carried away by emotions. Emotions are dominating his mind. His reason is only used to gratify the emotions. That means reason has become a slave of the emotions.

This is what Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, saw in the child and the neurotic; they are both dominated by the pleasure principle (the *id*). The difference between neurosis and normality is only a matter of degree. “All normal people (*puthujjana*),” said the Buddha, “are insane.” This means they are either psychotic or neurotic to some degree. They are mainly following two extreme ways of living, according to the Buddha. They are either devoted to sensual pleasure or are practicing an ascetic way of life, suppressing the emotions, both ways of living being mental sicknesses. According to Sigmund Freud the healthy personality is dominated by the reality principle (the rational *ego*). The Buddha too pointed out that the healthy way of living is the medial path between emotional indulgence and self-mortification, which is relaxation of body and calmness of mind devoted to the pursuit of the imperturbable serenity of mind NĪRVĀNA.

This means, the healthy way of living for the human being is to maintain a tranquil mind and be dominated by reason and not by emotion. All emotions are self-centered according to the Buddha, and so was it for Freud. Unselfish good behaviour is possible only when the mind is free of selfish emotions. Universal goodwill (*mettā*) is not an emotion. It comes from a mind free of the self-centered emotions. Emotion is a disturbance of the mind and body. It is a tranquil mind and a relaxed body that is free of self-centered emotions. It is such a mind that can become interested in the welfare of others for their sake. This selfless interest in the welfare of all beings (*mettā*) is genuine love. This means true love and mental health is the absence of self-centered emotions.

The rational faculty or the intellect is the special quality that distinguishes the human being from other animals. The development of this faculty and the mind being dominated by reason instead of emotion is the way to become fully human. Therefore, gaining freedom from emotional domination and being dominated by reason is not only conducive to mental health, but it is also the way to become fully human. This also means that to realize the religious ideal of union with God is to become fully human. To become fully human is to transcend all human weaknesses and become superhuman. This fully human state is therefore supernormal or superhuman. It is divine because it is the realization of the ideal of perfection that human beings worship as God.

This is why Buddhism is a humanistic religion, which is a process of evolution of the human consciousness to the ultimate point in the evolutionary process. The human being transcends the ordinary imperfect human state and becomes fully human in reaching the state of perfection. In doing so the human being enters a Superhuman Divine state. This fully human state is no more human because it has transcended all human weaknesses and become united with God and become God.

This Transcendence or Awakening is called the defeat of *Māra*, the Killer (*Māra parājaya*), which is the embodiment of evil. Throughout human history, in every religion and every culture, this idea of a conflict between **God** and the **Devil** has been expressed. This conflict is in fact the conflict between **good** and **evil** within human nature. In Buddhist thinking the Buddha takes the place of God and Mara takes the place of the Devil. In modern psychology, Sigmund Freud recognized this conflict as the conflict between the *ego* and the *id*. Today it is expressed as the conflict between the **cognitive** and the **affective**. In common parlance it is seen as the conflict between the **head** and the **heart**. The aim of the Buddha was to resolve this conflict between emotion and reason. This resolution is achieved through the wisdom of the Buddha and not his power. It was achieved through a process of evolution of the human consciousness.

The defeat of *Māra* also means overcoming death. This means that the Buddha attained **immortality**. This immortality, however, is not eternal life. It does not mean that he became eternal. He simply **awoke from the dream of existence**. Existence is seen in Buddhism as a dream or delusion. The normal human being is only dreaming of existence. He “does not really exist.” In other words, the normal human being is not fully conscious. It is only when he has become fully conscious that he awakens from the dream. This awakening is a matter of growth or evolution. This process of evolution, however, is not an unconscious process, as in biological evolution. It is a conscious process of psychological evolution. It has to be achieved through a conscious wilful effort of each individual. “Each individual has to make the effort; a Buddha can only show the way” (*Dhammapada*).

Death is the main problem of life, according to the Buddha. Life itself is a continuous struggle against death. This is what Charles Darwin saw as the struggle for existence. This struggle for existence always ends in death. Every individual who is born must die. Everyone is defeated in this fight against death. Therefore, this struggle against

death is futile. Immortality is seen as an unrealistic goal. The natural law is that everything that is integrated is subject to disintegration. This is the law of determinism, on which scientific discovery and invention is based. This law states that every occurrence in the world is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions.

This means the entire process of life, which is the struggle for existence, is a mistake. It is an effort to become permanent in an impermanent world. This mistaken process of life, or struggle for existence, resulting in evolution, had to continue till the conscious human being evolved with an intelligence to reason out and realize that this struggle to exist was a mistake. It is only then that the human being consciously started the psychological process of evolution of consciousness itself and ultimately awoke from the dream of existence and stopped the struggle for existence, realizing that there is no real existence to struggle for. It is only when this has been achieved that the problem of existence is perfectly solved. This is also the perfect mental health. This mental health is not normal; it is supernormal and superhuman and therefore divine. This is the transcendence of human nature, where man becomes God, the anthropomorphic God.

Even before the human being rises to that highest perfect level of evolution, if he turns his mind in that direction, and begins to move towards the goal of awakening he has entered the stream that flows into the ocean of "Awakening." This entrance is a sublime (*ariya*) level, at which one begins to enjoy a happiness that ordinary people do not experience. Such a person is called one who has entered the stream (*sotāpanna*). Only such a person has become a true Buddhist. One does not become a Buddhist by birth or even conviction; one becomes a Buddhist only by beginning the conscious process of evolution of consciousness. This is a level of mental health where one is free from all neurosis and psychosis. At this stage one becomes mentally healthy in the normal sense, though the perfect

mental health is gained only when one awakens fully from the dream of existence.

Existential philosophers pointed to the problem: “out of all animals it is the human being who is aware of his own existence and is also aware that he is going to die.” This creates anxiety, worry, fear, and anguish. Theistic existentialists attempted to solve the problem by taking the leap of faith. The atheistic existentialists attempted to solve it by using human potentials.

It is this same **problem of existence**, which is **death** and **unhappiness** that all religions **HOPE** to solve, sometimes through an escape from reality into a fantasy of eternal life.

It was the **Buddha**, however, who solved the **problem of existence** by means of a **paradigm shift** from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. He **Awakened** from the **fantasy of eternal existence** into the **reality of the absence of existence**. This is why he is called the **BUDDHA**, the one who has **awakened from the dream of existence**.

This book on meditation contain information on the **ultimate solution** of the **problem of existence** – which is **birth, ageing, sickness, and death** – The **ever-threatening insecurity of life** (*dukkha*).

## BEATING THE DRUM OF DEATHLESSNESS

Open is the door to immortality  
For those who have ears to hear  
LISTEN and be FREE from DEATH  
The drum is still beating )))))  
HARKEN  
Only those with little dust in their eyes  
WILL SEE the Way OUT!



## THE 123 YEAR OLD BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA, BRICKFIELDS

The Buddhist Maha Vihara was founded in 1894 by the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society (SAWS), the oldest registered Buddhist Society in the Klang Valley.

From its very inception, the Vihara has been managed by the Sinhala Buddhist community but always financially supported by the Chinese and Indian communities. The first structure of the Vihara was the Main Shrine room, completed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The donors for the Shrine Room, as recorded in the Selangor Government Gazette 1896, pg. 408 are clearly Chinese and Indian communities and among the main donors were:

*Kapitan Yeap Quang Seng, Towkay Loke Yew, K. Tambusamy Pillay, R. Doraisamy Pillay, Loke Chow Kit, San Peng and Son, Lim Tua Taw, etc...*

The Vihara was always the focal point to mobilize the Buddhist community. The large gathering to protest and stop the screening of the then controversial film “Light of Asia” in 1927 in Malaysia was also held at the Vihara, and so was the mass gathering and signature campaign in the 1950s to lobby the government to declare Wesak as a national holiday.

During the Emergency period of 1948-1960, monks from the Vihara made a massive impact reaching out to calm and educate the psychologically disoriented Chinese New Villagers who were evicted from their traditional lands and placed in new settlements by the Government which was fighting a communist insurgency.

Since the 1940s, the Vihara commenced a free Dhamma publications program as a Dhammadutta outreach to the masses which by the year 2012 was made available in 28 languages, with millions of

copies of books and CDs produced. The Vihara's Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School (BISDS), founded in 1929, is the oldest Sunday School in the country with an enrolment of more than 1200 students and continues to produce systematic books on Buddhist studies for children.

The Wesak procession organized by the Vihara since the 1890s is the oldest and largest religious procession in the country. The 3-day Wesak celebrations at the Vihara attracts about 100,000 people.

Many students or devotees who have studied and benefited from the BISDS, the Vihara's Free Publications, Dhamma programs, classes, talks, etc have gone on to set up new Buddhist societies and centers which help to spread Buddhism in the country far and wide.

The SAWS is also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) formed in 1983, a Council which constructively engages the Government on matters affecting non-Muslims in the country. The MCCBCHST Administrative office is based at the Vihara.

In 2004, the Vihara was a major focal point in the country to collect relief aid to assist the South Asian Tsunami that killed almost 280,000 people. Several forty foot container equivalents of relief aid were dispatched by the Vihara to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Myanmar and Thailand by air, sea and land.

Buddhists remain the country's largest organ donors, thanks to Cornea and Organ Donation Campaign carried out by the Vihara.

The Vihara continues to operate to deliver its obligation to the Buddhist community till this day and is governed and directed by its Vision, 4 Missions, 6 Strategic Objectives and 4 Ennoblers in tribute and gratitude to all our past and current Sangha, volunteers,

donors, friends, etc. We would be failing in our duty if we fail to mention the name of the foremost amongst them, our late Venerable Chief, ie. Ven Dr Kirinde Sri Dhammananda.

### ***Vision***

To be a leading international center for the Learning, Practice and Dissemination of the Buddha Dhamma

### ***Mission***

To provide a conducive environment to:

- promote scholarship and study of the Buddha Dhamma
- propagate the Buddha Dhamma
- be the focus of Buddhist activities for the larger community
- foster Theravada Buddhist cultural and traditional practices

### ***Six Strategic Objectives***

To be the Buddhist center of choice for:

1. Learning, Practising and the Realization of the Dhamma
2. Spreading the Dhamma
3. Buddhist Civilization
4. Synergy groupings to sustain the Buddha Sasana
5. Compassion in Action
6. Financial Accountability while delivering Cultural Obligations

### ***Four Ennoblers:***

1. Loving Kindness
2. Compassion
3. Altruistic Joy
4. Equanimity

### ***Motto***

Go forth, for the good, happiness and welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world.

## SERVICES AVAILABLE AT BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA

- Dana for Monks (at Vihara or Home) and Bana (Sermons)
- Blessing Services / Funeral Services by Monks
- Booking of Facilities for religious functions / events
- Marriage Registration
- Full Moon / New Moon Day Puja & Free Vegetarian Lunch
- Sunday Dhamma Classes for Children & Adults
- Buddhist & Pali University Diploma, Degree & Masters Program
- K Sri Dhammananda Library
- Bookshop

### WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

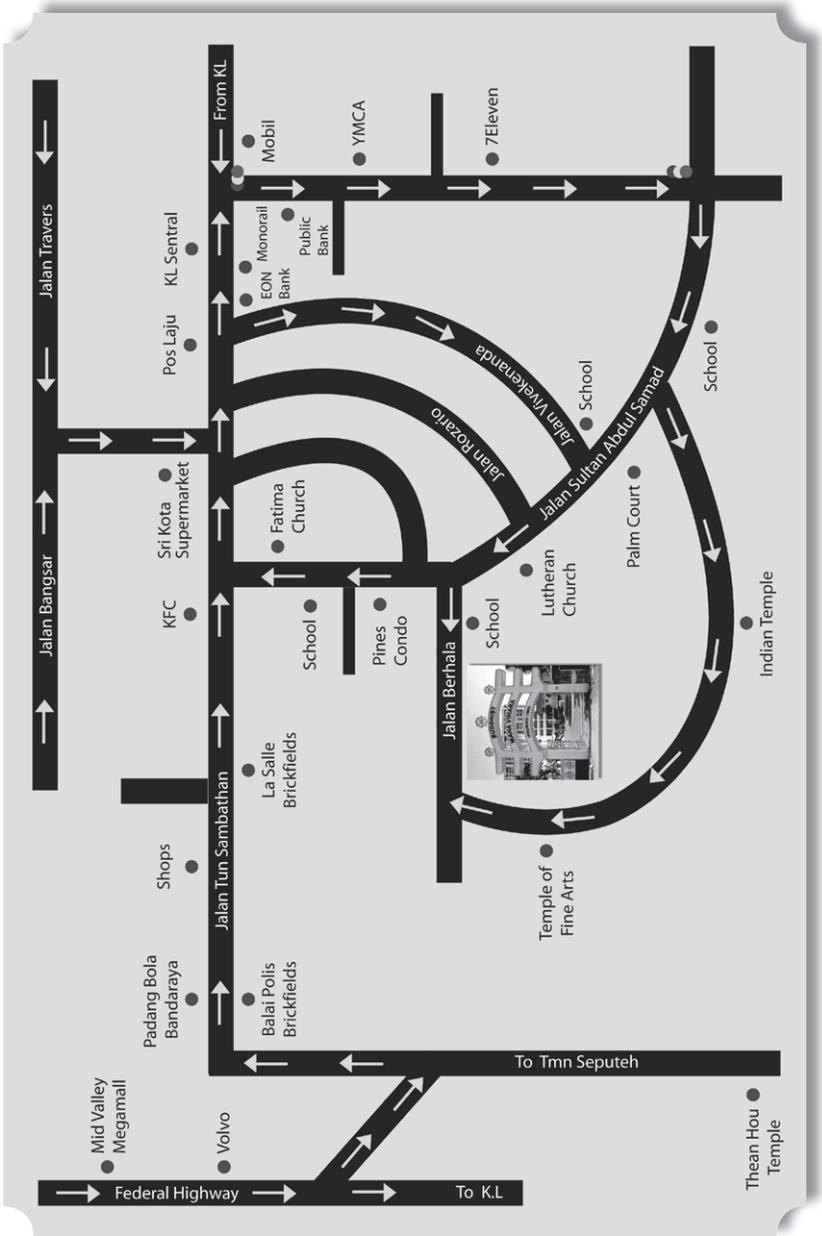
• Daily Puja		6.30a.m. & 7.30p.m.
• Choir Practice	Tuesday	8.00p.m.
• Special Talk	Friday	1.00p.m.
• Dhamma Talk	Friday	8.00p.m.
• Meditation	Mon, Wed & Thurs	8.00p.m.
• Bojjhanga Puja	Saturday	7.30p.m. - 8.30p.m.
• Puja & Talk	Sunday	8.30a.m.
• Dhamma School Session	Sunday	9.30a.m. - 12.00 noon
• Dharma for the Deaf (fortnightly)	Sunday	2.00p.m.
• Feeding the Needy	Sunday	5.00p.m.
• Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic (twice a month)	Sunday	10.00a.m. - 2.00p.m.
• Sinhala Language Classes	Sunday	1.30p.m. - 3.00p.m.
• Sinhala Cultural Dance Classes	Sunday	3.00p.m. - 5.00p.m.
• Diploma, Degree & Masters Program in Buddhism	Sunday	2.00p.m. - 7.00p.m.

### DONATION IN CASH OR KIND CAN BE MADE FOR:

- BISDS Building Fund - Classrooms, Meditation Pavilion, Lifts, Meeting and Counseling rooms
- Free Publications (Malaysia and Overseas) - Annually about 300,000 books in 30 Languages
- Education Fund
- Full Moon and New Moon services sponsorship
- General Maintenance of the Buddhist Maha Vihara
- Utilities (Electricity, water, telephone, administration etc)
- Illumination (lighting) of the Main Shrine Hall
- Illumination (lighting) of the Awkana Buddha & Cakra
- Monks' Dana - Offering Monk Requisites of Food, Medicine, Lodging, Robes, etc
- Welfare Fund
- Special Religious Events
  - Wesak
  - Annual Blessing Service
  - Annual Merit Offering
  - Kathina Pinkama (ceremony)
  - Monks' Novitiate Programme

**MAY THE BLESSINGS OF THE NOBLE TRIPLE GEM  
BE WITH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

# LOCATION MAP TO BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA



# DONATION FORM

## **Buddhist Maha Vihara**

123, Jalan Berhala, Brickfields,

50470 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan, Malaysia.

Tel: 603-2274 1141 Fax: 603-2273 2570

I / We would like to make a donation to the Buddhist Maha Vihara.

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Address : .....

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Amount : RM .....

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Others, please specify

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292-00-01161-8, HONG LEONG BANK, BRICKFIELDS, KL.  
Kindly send us a copy of your BANK SLIP so that we can send you an  
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Donations can also be made by VISA and MasterCard at the Buddhist  
Maha Vihara Office.



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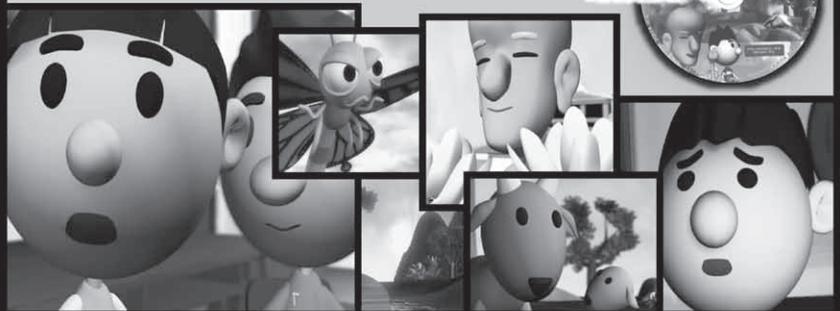
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