

# Grasping

Upādāna Sutta



Venerable Panadure Chandaratana Thero

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Free distribution only.

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Venerable Pānadure Chandaratana Thero

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*“upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhūto dukkhaṃ nigacchati.  
jātassa maraṇaṃ hoti, eso dukkhassa sambhavo.  
“tasmā upādānakkhayā, sammadaññāya paṇḍitā.  
jātikkhayaṃ abhiññāya, na gacchanti punabbhavan”ti.*

Dvayatānupassanā sutta (KN 5.38)

“From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming.

One who has come into being goes to suffering.

There is death for one who is born.

This is the coming into play of suffering.

Thus, with the ending of clinging, the wise seeing rightly,

directly knowing the ending of birth,

go to no further becoming.

## **Abbreviations**

AN - Aṅguttara Nikāya

DN – Dīgha Nikāya

MN – Majjhima Nikāya

KN – Khuddaka Nikāya

SN – Saṃyutta Nikāya

\* All sutta numbers are as per the Chatta Sangāyana CD

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## Author's Preface

At the outset I wish to thank Ms Sriya Hettiarachchi as she is the one who requested us to conduct a few sermons on Grasping. Accordingly we delivered two sermons in November at the Kalalgoda meditation retreat. The sermons were then transcribed by Dr Asoka Ramanayake and Mr Naweena Kularatne. Mrs Rani Rajapaksha helped in proofreading the book.

Quality Printers undertook the task of printing it beautifully and my good friend, Amil designed an attractive cover page which added value to the book.

May the merit accrued by this collective effort help us all to practise the Buddha's teaching to the best of our ability.

May all beings be free from suffering.

*Ven Chandaratana*

Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya Forest Monastery

2023-03-10





## Introduction

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa,*

*“cattārimāni, bhikkhave, upādānāni. katamāni cattāri?  
kāmupādānaṃ, diṭṭhupādānaṃ, sīlabbatupādānaṃ,  
attavādupādānaṃ”<sup>1</sup>*

Dear Friends in Dhamma,

I wish to discuss the subject of *upādāna*; clinging, grasping, holding on to, or adhering to. This is a phenomenon that constantly arises in our mind, and as a result, we end up with a great deal of suffering. In Dependent Origination (*paticca samuppāda*), the Buddha explains how this clinging, or grasping leads to becoming (*upādāna paccayā bhavo*). Then how this becoming gives rise to various kinds of suffering.

So, recognising the types of *upādāna*, clinging, grasping, is quite vital. A significant importance is given in Dhamma to explain the different types of clinging that arise in the mind. On various occasions, the Buddha has explained these different kinds of grasping. Before explaining them, we first need to understand another definition given by the Buddha. Here the Buddha explained that there are things that can be clung to (*upādāniyā dhammā*) and

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<sup>1</sup> Upādāna sutta (SN 45.108)

then there is clinging (*upādāna*) itself.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, these are two separate factors. ie. things that can be clung to or that can be grasped and then there is the activity that goes on in the mind called grasping.

The Buddha also explained that there are different kinds of forms; sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles that can be grasped.<sup>3</sup> We may go on picnics, trips and even to different countries to see certain sights, because they are beautiful. Then there are various sounds, musical melodies that would be quite pleasing. There are tangibles that also are quite pleasurable. Even there would be various ideas attractive to the mind. Thus, there are different types of things (sights, sounds etc.) which we get attached to and these are the things that can be clung to (*upādānīyā dhammā*).

The Buddha also elaborates on different feelings that can arise within us. There are pleasurable feelings, which we typically grasp and there are painful feelings which we constantly try to get rid of; which is the other side of grasping. Then there are feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful, which sometimes we also would grasp. So, we are constantly grasping these different kinds of feelings.

There are also different perceptions that arise constantly in our mind. Ex. I like this; I like that; this is a good colour; this is a bad colour etc. We have various perceptions also which we can grasp. Further, our mind is constantly thinking and these thought formations also we can grasp.

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<sup>2</sup> *rūpaṃ, bhikkhave, upādāniyo dhammo, yo tattha chandarāgo, taṃ tattha upādānaṃ. vedanā ... saññā... saṅkhārā... viññāṇaṃ - Upādāniya sutta (SN 22.121)*

<sup>3</sup> *cakkhuṃ, bhikkhave, upādāniyo dhammo. yo tattha chandarāgo, taṃ tattha upādānaṃ ... sota ... ghāna... jivhā ... kāya... mano - Upādāniya sutta (SN 35.93)*

As we constantly use our six senses, they give rise to various information and that also we can grasp. Thus, there is a spectrum of objects which we can grasp.

On the other hand, the Buddha mentioned that in our mind there could be desire, greed, lust towards those different things and that is called grasping. So, the beautiful things alone are not the problem. Therefore, the problem lies not with the beautiful things outside. But there is lust, there is greed, there is attachment, desire arising in the mind. This is the problem. This is what we call *upādāna* - grasping.<sup>4</sup>

The Buddha divided all different grasping into four categories. The first one is quite obvious, *kāma upādāna*, the clinging to sensual pleasures. Then the Buddha mentions that there is *ditṭhi upādāna*, clinging to various views. Then there is *sīlabbata upādāna*, clinging to various rules, rituals, observances and there is *attavāda upādāna*, the fourth category, that is clinging to the sense of "I". These are the four categories. We are constantly subjected to all these different kinds of grasping, knowingly or unknowingly; these four are continuously arising in our mind.

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<sup>4</sup> *na te kāmā yāni citrāni loke, saṅkapparāgo purisassa kāmo  
tiṭṭhanti citrāni tatheva loke. ahettha dhīrā vinayanti chandan.*  
Nibbedhika sutta (AN 6.63)

*puttā matthi dhanammatthi, iti bālo vihaññati.  
attā hi attano natthi, kuto puttā kuto dhanaṃ.*

*The fool worries, thinking, "I have sons, I have wealth."  
Indeed, when he himself is not his own, whence are sons,  
whence is wealth?*

*Dhammapada - 62*

## Clinging to sensual pleasures

### *kāma upādāna*

Let us take the first one *kāma upādāna*, which is the obvious one. We know that this world we are living in, is the *kāma* world or the sensual world, or the sense sphere. Various pleasurable things are there in it; pleasurable sights, pleasurable sounds, pleasurable odours, pleasurable tastes, pleasurable tangibles are there, and even pleasurable ideas are there. So, we constantly go after them. Typically, in this world, people are driven by this pleasure principle; constantly driven by these pleasures. *Sukha kāmāni bhūtāni*.<sup>5</sup>

Every being is going after the pleasures and happiness. But how are we deriving happiness? Typically using these different sense objects, sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles and mental objects. We are being incessantly driven by them. Hence, we constantly compete with others. Say in the family, one member may be competing with another member. For what? to get more. As children, if we are given something delicious, one sibling used to fight with another sibling just to get the tastiest food. As we grow up, probably we go after more beautiful things or pleasurable things. We want to go for a better job, so that we can earn more, we can satisfy our senses more, get more sensual gratification. We consider this as an important goal in our life. That is what typically the governments promise that they are going to provide. The next

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<sup>5</sup> Dhammapada pāli - 131

budget will promise to provide this and that. A lot of sense pleasures! Other than sense pleasures, is any government talking about mental well-being? very rarely. But they constantly promise to provide more and more sense pleasures, more and more sensual happiness. Infrastructure is for deriving more happiness or comfort to our eyes, nose, ears, tongue and to our body. These are the typical five sense objects, *kāma guṇa*. We are continuously being driven by them, because there is much enticement, much delight when we are acquiring them, when we are using them, tasting them, experiencing them. There is great delight in them. The Buddha does not deny this. It is called *assāda*, the delight. That is why we are being driven by *assāda*, the delight, we are being constantly dragged, pulled towards that.

The Buddha also gives various similes in several suttas about sensual pleasures, so that we can think differently, not in the typical sense - driven or desire - driven manner. In Poṭṭaliya sutta (MN 54), the Buddha gives eye-opening similes to these various sensual pleasures.

The Buddha says that sensual pleasures are like a meatless bone without flesh (*aṭṭhikaṅkalūpamā kāmā*). Suppose there is a hungry dog, it has not eaten for many days. Suppose it's a stray dog. Not a dog raised in a home. The dog somehow comes to a butcher's house, and this butcher is very skilful at extracting out even minuscule pieces of flesh from the bones. Such a bone without flesh is thrown to that dog. Now the hungry, starving dog impatiently grabs the bone and starts to chew it. Will this satisfy his hunger? It is tasty, but it's a bone without flesh. Ultimately the dog will suffer because the bone will wound its mouth. When blood comes out from his own wounds, he imagines that it comes from the bone; so he chews it more vigorously, resulting in more damage to his mouth. So this goes on in a vicious cycle. The Buddha says that sensual pleasures are exactly like this. However much we try to

gratify our senses, in the end we won't get what we long for just like the dog that chews on the bone without flesh .

In another simile for sensual pleasures, the Buddha says it is like a vulture that has gotten a piece of meat (*mamsapesūpamā kāmā*). It is flying in the sky with this piece of meat and there are many other vultures chasing it. Why? To grab the piece of meat. We know that there are only limited resources in the world, and everyone wants their share. So, a person who has some of the things, is constantly targeted, being attacked, being envied upon because he has something, which others also desire looking for. This is not only pertaining to individuals, but we can see this even in the society, even among countries. If a particular country has a lot of resources, it is very difficult for it to live in peace because many other countries will try to compete and even might try to attack or invade it. They might somehow try their best to acquire those resources.

Helping us to look at sensual pleasures differently, the Buddha also mentioned the simile of holding a blazing torch of straw against the wind (*tiṇukkūpamā kāmā*). In the good old days, we didn't have these modern torches or flashlights. So, people had to resort to these torches of straw. Suppose a person is carrying such a straw torch. Now it is burning, and he needs to walk against the wind. The flame will come towards that person. If he does not hold it very far from his body, he will get burnt. Accordingly, the Buddha says *kāma*, the sense pleasures are also like that. The person who is indulging in them is in some threat, some danger. He is not rid of danger and these pleasures can even harm him. This fact is not difficult to understand, when we see how people are driven by various sense pleasure and how ultimately, they end up with a lot of tragedies. They might even become sick sometimes, if they go through sense gratification, particularly sexual gratification frequently. It is very obvious how these things are happening today. There are many different ways to get easy access to various sights and sounds. People get easily being driven by them and might even



get addicted to them, constantly browsing, constantly watching various videos etc. These are quite attractive, and different methods are implemented to attract the audience more and more, to keep a person immersed in them. In a way we are quite innocent, we are being driven by them, we are being enticed, we are being tempted to constant browsing, watching, for many hours. Ultimately, we have wasted a lot of time. We end up by being stressed, frustrated, not getting whatever we have seen, not being able to acquire what we have seen and maybe even go to battle with others who already have these. A lot of frustrations, a lot of conflicts! The *kāma*, the sensual pleasures have the capacity, have the potential to even burn the person who is trying to enjoy them.

The Buddha also mentions that sensual pleasures are like a beautiful dream from which we must awaken (*supīnakūpamā kāmā*). Imagine a very interesting dream, a park with all kinds of flowers. You are with her, holding her hand, singing a beautiful song, enjoying the scenery. But this wonderful time all of a sudden comes to a stop; my goodness it is a dream. The Buddha mentions that sense pleasures are also like a dream, may be we are enjoying them, satisfying ourselves, thinking that we are fulfilled, but they are very short lived. Nevertheless, that is what we are going after, that is what we are aiming for. As young people, we are going after success, in indulging in more and more sense pleasures. When we get it, are we satisfied? Even the most beautiful sight, you can't enjoy for long.

Suppose you are in an art gallery, and you come across a painting of a beautiful scenery. You are now viewing it; oh, it's very beautiful! You observe it from another angle; it is beautiful. Moving to another angle and viewing it, it is still beautiful. For how long can you do that? One hour, two hours, half a day, one day, two days? For how long? You can enjoy it; you can appreciate its beauty, but not continually. Suppose you tell someone that you have seen a really marvellous artwork, then that person suggests to you to stay

there and view it for another day. But you can't do it. After some time you get fed – up. You might end up by even hating it! Similarly, suppose you like a particular song. You have listened to it. Now you recorded it and listened to it one more time. It is very beautiful. You are quite satisfied. You press the repeat button, so it's automatically repeating now. The second time it sounds okay, not that bad; can enjoy. The third time there might be some enjoyment, but would you want to go a fourth, fifth, sixth time? You will want to get rid of it now; you will want to switch it off. But this was the best song that you were enjoying just a while ago! Now it has become a burden to you, that you can't even bare it anymore. You can eat an ice cream and enjoy it immensely. But after eating the 10<sup>th</sup> ice cream, how would you feel? You will certainly vomit! All sensual pleasures are quite short-lived. If you are trying to repeatedly have them again and again at a stretch, you will not be able to bare them; your senses can't bare them. The sense gratification lasts only for a limited time. If we exceed this time, it will bring unpleasant feelings to us.

These are the things that are constantly going on in our mind. Once we close our eyes, what we have experienced in our past, if it was something gratifying, something beautiful, something fashionable, that has made a significant impact in our mind, we will remember that. What you are experiencing right now may be quite boring; for example, looking at the breath or looking at rising and falling or simply watching thoughts etc. But something we have experienced a few days ago, experienced a few hours ago, or experienced even several years ago, maybe very pleasant, beautiful, or pleasurable. These memories can come again and again to the mind and torment the mind. Similarly, you may even anticipate having some kind of gratification in the future. If not right now, if not in the past, why not in the future? That is another aspect. We can think even though currently we are not dwelling in any of these,

we can still fantasize or imagine. So, we are dreaming in away. These dreams, fantasies are quite attractive.

Now with the development of technology, virtual realities are there. Once you wear a special pair of glasses, you can enjoy the whole virtual reality. People love to be in these virtual satisfaction. You can imagine where we are heading towards. The teachings of the Buddha are not ancient, these teachings are not outdated. The Buddha's teachings constantly inform us where we are heading, how our minds are working. In the past, in the present, and even in the future, we as human beings are driven by all these different desires.

Further, the Buddha mentions that sensual pleasures are like borrowed goods (*yācitakūpamā kāmā*). Suppose a very poor woman is invited to a wedding. Since there is no money to have her own jewellery, ornaments, and attire, she goes to a rich friend and says, I have to attend to my friend's wedding, and I have to go properly dressed. Can you please lend me some nice jewellery and clothes? The friend agrees and she adorns in them and goes to the wedding. But she needs to return them later; it doesn't belong to her. Even if someone tells her, why don't you keep it, why can't she enjoy it, why can't you possess it forever? You can't. It's only a temporary possession. You can't hold on to it for long. The Buddha mentions that, sense pleasures are also like that; they are also short-lived. You can have it only for a short time. You can enjoy, you can have it, but later you must return it.

Another interesting simile given by the Buddha is that of a fruit tree (*rukkhaphalūpamā kāmā*). Suppose there is a mango tree, and someone has noticed it while he was walking on the road. He is quite hungry and there are delicious mangoes on the tree. He is climbs to the tree to pluck some ripe mangoes, but unfortunately another person also arrives. He can't climb the tree, but he has a very sharp axe. He too is really hungry. He can't wait. He doesn't

even notice that there is a man is on the tree already. Now what will he do? He will cut the tree down; as simple as that. Nowadays people don't think too much. They want something, they cut the tree, destroy it. I'm going to have it. That's it! Now what will happen to the person who came first? Either he must come down or else he will fall and break his limbs or might even die.

The Buddha mentions that sense pleasures are like that. There is always a competition for them. It is not only you who like them it. It is natural for everything; may be a beautiful sight, a beautiful sound, a pleasant odour, a pleasant taste or a pleasant tangible thing. It is the same, particularly for those five sense doors. It is not only you who like it them, everybody else likes them too. There's a huge competition and if you possess it, there are many others who are still looking forward to having them, who will compete for them. Therefore, there's a significant danger to you because you possess them. So, once you possess them, you need to protect them. In order to protect them you might even need to bear weapons etc. If someone intends to attack you, trying to forcefully get it, you will need to fight back. Now all kinds of conflicts will happen. This is the type of *upādāna* that we are constantly driven by. Even though I am mentioning these things briefly, you surely can understand in detail.

One time, a Brahmin asked Venerable Mahā Kaccāna, why there are various fights, conflicts among different groups. Those days, there were groups like the *khatiyas*, the *brahmins* etc. Today the names are different but still various groups conflict with each other. Countries are fighting with each other, communities are fighting with each other, families are fighting with each other, family member are fighting with each other. Why? Here the Venerable Mahā Kaccāna gave a general answer:

The sensual desires (*kāmarāga*) cause adherences (*abhinivesa*) in the mind, bondage in the mind (*vinibandha*), fixation in the mind

(*paligedha*), obsession in the mind (*pariyutṭhāna*) and holding firmly in the mind (*ajjhosāna*). As a result, people fight, quarrel are in conflict, going through battles and wars.<sup>6</sup> At first, we are attached to something, it can be a simple sight, but it can be a little beautiful. So, you look at it more enthusiastically. Previously you simply saw it, but now you see with intention. You are exploring what you are seeing. Now what happens naturally? More and more desires, and more proliferations. Previously there weren't many thoughts. You saw it only unintentionally. But now since it is beautiful, you are looking at it deliberately. Your enthusiasm growing, you're even going to explore it further. More and more desires! In this process, Venerable Mahā Kaccāna mentioned that there are the different stages that our mind would go through.

There could be *abhinivesa*, where you now go and adhere to it. Even if the object of your desire is not there, you can even imagine about it, once you close your eyes. You have an image in your mind of what you have seen. Your mind is now adhered to it. Sometimes you might not even be able to forget it. Suppose that a young man comes across a beautiful girl. He inadvertently saw her, but now he is a little impressed by her, watching with intent, getting closer, maybe take a picture of her somehow, getting more and more interested, getting adhered. Now he can't even forget her. Wherever he goes, he sees her face.

The mind being adhered to her and now has a bondage (*vinibaddha*) to her. The mind is being bonded to her, attached to her. Then fixation (*paligedha*) happens. Now he can't see anything else. He is attracted and fully fixated with her. But that girl's mother disapproves of him; She thinks that he is not suitable for her. What will he do now? He can't think of anyone else now. He thinks, only

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<sup>6</sup> *kāmarāgābhinivesavinibandha paligedhapariyutṭhānajjhosānahetu kho, brāhmaṇa, khattiyāpi khattiyehi vivadanti, brāhmaṇāpi brāhmaṇehi vivadanti, gahapatikāpi gahapatikehi vivadanti*"ti.

Samacittavaggo (AN 2.33-42)

if I get her, I am going to marry, I am going to live, otherwise I will commit suicide. These things can happen! These things are happening today. There are young people who commit suicide because parents have objected to their relationship. Our minds get fixated with what we are attached to. But previously, we only had seen something by mere chance. Then we were interested, and we started exploring it. Then we started to ponder more and more about it and we now get attached, adhere to it and ultimately fixated on it. Now it is very difficult to escape from it. It is difficult to release. Obsession (*pariyutthāna*), consistently thinking, more and more thinking. Thinking from morning to night. Thinking about what? What we have seen, what we are obsessed with, what we are interested in. Now we are holding firmly (*ajjhosana*). Venerable Mahā Kaccāna asks, do such things happen only in one particular person's mind? How about the others? They are also going through the same thing. So, if somebody else also has gone through the same process for the same object, then they will be in conflict. So, the whole world go through these adherences, these bondages, these fixations, obsessions, that are held firmly. Thus, ultimately the world is full of conflicts, battles and wars and immense suffering.

*saññāvirattassa na santi ganthā, paññāvīmuttassa na santi mohā.  
saññañca diṭṭhiñca ye aggahesuṃ, te ghaṭṭayantā vicaranti loke*

*For one detached from perception there are no knots;  
for one liberated by wisdom there are no delusions.  
But those who have grasped perceptions and views wander in the world  
creating friction.*

*Māgaṇḍiya sutta - Sutta Nipāta*

## Clinging to views *diṭṭhi upādāna*

Now, let's discuss the next type of *upādāna*, clinging to views (*diṭṭhi upādāna*). When we observe things, it is subjected to some distortion. We think things are generally beautiful, permanent and we can obtain a lot of satisfaction, gratification from them. We think these things can be under our control. This is how we think when we acquire something, get delighted with it, going after it. If we consider the underlying tendencies in our mind, we think that we can be satisfied with it, we can have it, we can possess it, we can own it, we can control it the way we like and the way we want. That is why we want to own it for ourselves so that we control the way we want. Such an attitude, the Buddha says will lead to distortions in the mind. Here the object itself doesn't have any agreement with us, to say that I am going to give you satisfaction, I am going to be permanent since you are interested, I agree to be owned by you forever, I can be controlled by you forever etc.

However, the object is not under this notion. The object, whatever it is, is constantly subject to impermanence and incessant changes. It is governed by various other external conditions. These conditions are also changing. So, ultimately the person who is going after it, is going to suffer, because he is thinking that the object itself



can bring him lasting happiness, satisfaction, control and ownership. These underlying distortions are constantly operating in our mind, these are what we call distortions / perversions (*vipallasa*). We are thinking in this manner, driven by such distortions and now we think about it further. At first, there was only a simple recognition. But this too was based on distorted recognitions, and these generated thoughts are also misleading. This is what we call, *cittha vipallāsa*. Now you are thinking more and more about it. Obsessive thinking. Now you are fixated. How about that fixation? Is it correct? This is also wrong, it is also distorted and this what we call, *ditṭhi vipallasa*. Now we are of a strong view, fixed view, which is also completely wrong. Thus, our recognition process is subjected to some distortions. Based on it we are thinking, which is also distorted. Based on excessive thinking, obsessive thinking, we come to a conclusion, a fixed view. This view too now is distorted.

Interestingly, that brahmin also asked another question from Venerable Mahā Kaccāna. Different lay groups fight with each other. Now a days, Russians are fighting with Ukrainians. One might argue that there might be some reasons for it. But then, why are some ascetics fighting with some other ascetics? Ascetics are supposed to be very peaceful people. Monks and the other religious groups are also like this. They are not like lay people. Even though they have no interest in sensual pleasures, they have different objectives. Why are these groups fighting with each other? Even if they are practising the same religion, are they living cordially, looking at everyone with kind eyes, at the presence or even in their absence every time with loving kindness? This is what the Buddha expected of the monks. Are all monks behaving like this? So, this brahmin asks Venerable Mahā Kaccāna, why are these monks, ascetics fighting with each other? Why are there disputes, conflicts among them? It is quite obvious from the previous answer, that different lay groups, communities, members of the family, different

villages, countries, nations are fighting. Why? Particularly driven by sense pleasures. As a result of that, they adhere to something. Now they have a lot of bondages and fixations in the mind, obsessions in the mind and holding firmly to those sense pleasure related things.

But why these ascetics? They are renunciants. They have renounced the lay life. They have given up all physical things. Why are they fighting? Venerable Mahā Kaccāna mentions,

*diṭṭhirāga abhinivesa vinibandha paligedha pariyuṭṭhāna  
ajjhosāna hetu kho, brāhmaṇa, samaṇāpi samaṇehi vivadantī”ti.*

It is not because of something physical, rather it is something pertaining to the mind. They have desire to certain views (*diṭṭhirāga*). One group has a fixation to a particular view. A simple example, one group says the world is flat. But another group says it is spherical. Is it some sense pleasure? No. It is a view. One group says there is birth after death, but another group says no, it's the last birth. Different groups have different views. Venerable Mahā Kaccāna mentions different views are the reason why conflicts, arguments, quarrels, wars, take place among ascetics, renunciants, monks, and different religious groups. Thus, not only sense pleasures, even our mental adherences or fixations to various views and thoughts also cause the same kind of harm. You can't say it is less harmful than the previous. These can even instigate lay people to go into battle. These things are happening even today; a certain religious group is the one leading a particular government, they advise and rule others. Their view is the one that is being followed and that should be strictly followed. The whole group will readily get into a fight with another group and even massacre if the latter disagree with them.

If we refer to Paramaṭṭhaka sutta in Sutta nipāta, aṭṭhaka vagga.

*paramanti ditṭhīsu paribbasāno, yaduttari kurute jantu loke.  
hīnāti aññe tato sabbamāha, tasmā vivādāni avōivatto.*

Here the Buddha mentions, if one is holding on to a particular view, and he says it is the best view, the correct view, he says that everyone else's view, their understanding is wrong; it is inferior to mine (*hīnāti aññe*); my view is the best. Then, as a result, this world is never going to be free from conflict (*tasmā vivādāni avōivatto*). Whatever we think is correct, we hold as correct, we believe as correct then we start believing in it so strongly, holding it and defending it. If someone attacks it, denies it, challenges it, then we would be in conflict with them. We would be at war.

There is another interesting point. When someone says you are wrong, and I am correct, why do I try to defend my view? Say I possess a car, and someone is trying to steal it. Then of course there is a strong reason. It is my car. I am the one who is using it. I own it. I am the one who holds all the documents. So, there are enough reasons for me to make an objection to it. It is something tangible. But suppose someone being challenged about their view. Why can't he simply toss it away. There you see another interesting reason.

This, in fact is the fourth reason that we shall discuss later. There's a strong "I". While we are holding on to a view, and if someone is challenging that view, what will happen to the sense of self? If I accept someone else's view, what happens to my self-view? It will be degraded. I am being marginalized. But I want to be superior to him. I want to be the greatest. I want to be this very special person. I want to be the teacher, and they should follow me. I don't want to be looked down upon. I don't want to be corrected by another person. I am the best! I am holding the best view. My view is the best view. So, you can see how this self view is closely attached to all these things. When someone tells me that, what I hold, what I believe is wrong and has some defects, I get offended. Probably I can see that my view is wrong, but I am not ready to

accept it. Then my self-view is deprecated. So, my personality view, my personality, my self-recognition, my self – esteem are being challenged. Even though it is quite evident to me that what the other person is telling is true, I am not going to accept it, because my strong personality being challenged.

*Diṭṭhi upādāna* therefore, could be even stronger and even more dangerous than typical sense desires. If you are attached to some sensual desire, you probably know it is short-lived and you might understand their repercussions and consequences. You might not even be interested about that after some time. But the view (*diṭṭhi*) does not diminish like that. It's not subjected to that kind of impermanence. If you are constantly feeding a view, you would hold on to it more and more. There may be many supporters also, who would tell you, 'yes bhante you are the best, your view is the correct one' etc. You are being venerated, your view is being highly recognised, being rewarded. Now there are many supporters following your view. So, you will now become a teacher, a world-renowned teacher.

Venerables Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna as lay people, Upatissa and Kolita were followers of Sanjaya. One day, Upatissa met Venerable Assaji. Because Venerable Assaji's behavior, his appearance and everything about him were very pleasant, calm, relaxed and tranquil, Upatissa wanted to know, what exactly were the teaching he was following. Upatissa was quite taken up by Venerable Assaji, so he followed Venerable Assaji, questioning him, what is the teaching he was following. Then Venerable Assaji in brief gave the gist of the teaching of the Buddha.<sup>7</sup> Upatissa instantly understood the teaching and he asked where Buddha lived. With that information, he returned to Kolita and mentioned what he had heard. Kolitha too understood. Now as very grateful students, they

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<sup>7</sup> 'ye dhammā hetuppabhavā, tesam hetum tathāgato āha. tesañca yo nirodho, evaṃ vādī mahāsamaṇo' - Sāriputtatherāpadānaṃ (KN 10.3)

went to their teacher, Sanjaya. They understood that these teachings were beautiful, important and very valuable. They thought, rather than us going alone, we had better tell our teacher as well, as an expression of gratitude. They went to Sanjaya and informed that Buddha is living in this particular place, we have heard his teaching and now we have decided to go there. Please join us. Sanjaya tells them, okay wise people may go to the Buddha, but the majority are not wise. When I can be a teacher to many, why do I want to be a student of the Buddha? You may go, there are enough people who are following me, so I am not coming with you.

You can see this is not something tangible that Upatissa and Kōlitha are asking for. The view! The teaching of Sanjaya is quite inferior to the Buddha's teaching. But when Upatissa and Kolita tried to convince Sanjaya, he didn't want to go with them. He even understood that there is something important there, but he didn't want to give up his view.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the views are also something we strongly adhere to. We can't easily give them up. There are plenty of evidence in the Canon, as to how the Buddha tried hard to convince people who were with wrong views.

You probably might have heard about three Jatila (matted-haired) brothers who were advanced Samatha yogis, who possessed many psychic powers and consequently held a very strong pride. The Buddha went to them and tried his best using various psychic powers to convince them. But they didn't accept it. Ultimately it was with much difficulty that the Buddha managed to convince them. So, it was much more difficult to convince them than a person who simply follows the sense pleasures. These *ditṭhis* or views are so deluding, strongly held, fixing the mind and thus you can't think beyond those strict and strong limitations set out for you

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<sup>8</sup> *asāre sāramatino - sāre cāsāradassino.*

*te sāraṃ nādhigacchanti - micchāsāṅkappagocarā.*

Dhammapada 11

by the *Ditṭhi*. You are strongly tied up by them and enslaved by them. The mind is fixed on to a particular routine. It's constantly going on with that same routine. So, changing it or thinking out of that routine is very difficult. That's why when Buddha understood that certain people that were with wrong view, he did not even try to preach to them. He simply gave up on them. So strong is the grasping. As you can see, not only for *kāma upādāna*, even *ditṭhi upādāna* is very strong. Our minds are addicted to grasping and holding on to things.

As a side note, how about right view (*Sammā ditṭhi*)? Are you going strongly to hold *Samma ditṭhi*, so that if anyone is going to challenge it, you are ready to defend *Sammā ditṭhi*? The Buddha mentions that if you are holding to *Samma ditṭhi*, then it is not really *Sammā ditṭhi*. Any kind of view you are holding cannot be proper *Sammā ditṭhi*. See how clever Buddha is! He is going against the grain. Our minds are quite conditioned to grasp and it can even grasp something called *Sammā ditṭhi*. If so, The Buddha, cleverly mentioned that it is not *Sammā ditṭhi*, but still another *ditṭhi* particularly when talking about the supra-mundane *Sammā ditṭhi*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Kaccānagotta sutta (SN 12.15)

*na monena munī hoti, mūlharūpo aviddasu.  
yo ca tulaṃva paggayha, varamādāya paṇḍito.*

*Not by observing silence does one become a sage,  
if he be foolish and ignorant.*

*But that man is wise who,  
as if holding a balance-scale accepts only the good.*

*Dhammapada - 268*

## Clinging to rituals and observances *sīlabbata upādāna*

Now, let me touch the other one, the third kind, *sīlabbata upādāna*. People follow various rules, adherences, observances, rites and rituals. Even today, they follow certain rituals, various observances etc. You can see that they have certain beliefs and certain attachments. Do you think that all these are good, or all these are bad? Suppose that somebody lights candles, offers flowers, suppose someone practices a little harsher method such as living like a dog - *kukkura vata* - a strong kind of observance, thinking that it can lead to purification. Even today if you go to India, there are fully naked ascetics, following certain rituals. On one occasion, the Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda what do you think, will all these rituals, observances lead to purification?” Then Ven. Ānanda replied, “We can't give a definite answer. It depends on the situation, depending on what you are observing, depending on what you are following. If you are following a particular ritual or adhering to a particular observance, and if it leads to the decrement of unwholesome states of your mind and improvement of wholesome states of your mind, then it's better to follow it. If you are following a particular ritual or adhering to a particular observance, and as a result, if the wholesomeness of your mind is reducing, unwholesome states are increasing then it is better to give it up.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sīlabbata sutta (AN 3.79)



What Ven Ananda therefore says is, you can't simply give a definite answer. It depends on whether your observance will lead to a state of wholesomeness or an unwholesomeness. That is the determining factor. Therefore, we can't say that all the rites and rituals are bad. But when we follow a particular rite or ritual, we need to see whether the wholesomeness of the mind is improving, increasing? Am I becoming more virtuous? Is it making my mind clearer? Will the ritual improve my wisdom? Particularly, if the wholesomeness of the mind is improving, then there is no harm. You can follow it further. But suppose you are following a particular ritual, because it came down from generations; your grandparent did it, your parents did it, your teachers did it. They are the ones who practised it, and you are also now blindly following it. If you honestly look back and ponder when you were following it, if the wholesomeness of your mind is degrading, reducing and unwholesome side of your mind is improving, increasing, then it is better to give it up. So, mere blind following of rites and rituals is not advised.

Even the *sīla* – precepts, if we are observing *sīla*, we need to examine when we are going through these observances does it make the mind happy, wholesome, or unwholesome? The grasping of *sīla* happens because we don't know how to observe *sīla* without grasping. Now, say a particular person, he's interested in becoming a monk. After ordaining, he is given the ten precepts, the *sāmanēra dasa sīla*. He wants to be an honest monk. He wants to protect the *sīla* strictly and he doesn't want to make even a slight mistake. He is strongly holding on to the *sīla*. This is a kind of grasping, making *sīla* a burden to the mind. Suppose he now becomes an *upasampadā bhikkhu*, a higher ordained monk. Now there are more rules, more and more precepts to observe. Now, this in turn could create a heavier burden in his mind. He is determined to observe the *sīla*, and to do it properly without the slightest mistake. This can create some pressure in his mind. If a misstep happens, then there will be

frustration, a lot of worries and doubts in his mind as to whether he is practicing properly or not.

So, if we don't know what the proper *sīla* is, how to properly observe it, how to properly adhere to it without making it a burden, then that itself can generate some kind of frustration, how do we know the limit? Are we going to strongly hold on to the precepts or are we going to loosely hold them? Suppose there is another monk who doesn't care about the rules. He doesn't care about the ascetic code or monastic code and is simply following his own instincts or desires. Do you think this is the best way? So how do you find the balance?

If we are observing proper *sīla*, the Buddha mentions that it will give satisfaction, happiness. For example, if you are following the restraint of the faculties (*indriya saṃvara*), then there is no harm, no influence coming from the sense objects. As a result, if the wholesomeness of the mind is being protected constantly for a long time, you might may experience a non-afflictive happiness (*abyāsekasukhaṃ*) because defilements are not torturing the mind.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, if you are following rules, precepts properly and you are not harming yourself, you are not harming others, then, when you look back, think about yourself, you feel happy because you are a good person. Because of your behavior, you haven't harmed yourself, and you haven't harmed another person. As a result of that you can enjoy happiness that is blameless (*anavajja sukha*).

However, in order to get this balance, a certain practice is essential. I don't think that, without mindfulness, without proper cultivation of mindfulness, that one can do it by merely following. Because in the early stages of the monkhood, when we are ardently trying to follow the precepts, it's very likely that we get into kind of strong holding of the *sīla*. We also could have various doubts,

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<sup>11</sup> so iminā ariyena indriyasaṃvarena samannāgato ajjhattaṃ abyāsekasukhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti. - Sāmaññaphala sutta, indriyasaṃvaro (DN 2.16)

regrets. But on the other hand, if you are neglecting *sīla*, that is not the proper thing to do either. So, in that sense, we can say that it is safe to strongly hold on to *sīla* in the beginning and continue the practice. The practice will eventually show you what the balance is, where the moderation is and how to follow properly. So, the mind would recognise when you are not strongly holding, or grasping. The mind would also recognise when you are loosely holding or neglecting. Such a quality needs to be developed within the mind.

In Dhammapada, the Buddha mentions an interesting verse.

*na sīlabbatamattena, bāhusaccena vā pana.  
atha vā samādhilābhena, vivittasayanena vā.  
phusāmi nekkhammasukhaṃ, aputhujjanasevitāṃ.  
bhikkhu vissāsamāpādi, appatto āsavakkhayaṃ.*<sup>12</sup>

A very strong indication is given here! The Buddha is addressing monks, they are observing certain precepts. For example, a higher ordained monk has a lot of precepts. Suppose he is observing them. He is a well restrained monk. The Buddha says, not through the mere observance of the precepts (*na sīlabbatamattena*), not just because you are a learned person (*bāhusaccena vā pana*); people can become very learned in the Canon. The Buddha says, not only through that. Not by having a *samādhi*; suppose a person with *jhāna*; first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna*, *arūpa jhāna*. Even not through that. Even not completely leading a secluded life (*vivittasayanena vā*); you are living alone. You are experiencing a renunciative happiness which is not common with the typical lay people, typical worldlings.

The Buddha is talking here about very sublime states; one thing is the *sīla*, the second factor is the learnedness and next factor the higher concentration, and then being secluded and with that you are enjoying the renunciative happiness. But the Buddha

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<sup>12</sup> Dhammapadapāli, dhammatṭha vago (KN 2.19)

mentions, ‘monks, you should not come to a conclusion; you should not satisfy yourself; don't think that you are successful. don't think that you are complete or fulfilled until you are free from all the influxes. That means, if one has any influx, ie. sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), desire to become (*bhavāsava*) or ignorance (*avijjāsava*), in one's mind, the Buddha mentioned, you should not say that you are fulfilled, and ‘I am done’. You can't say like that. The Buddha mentioned that even though your *sīla*, *samādhi* and your learnedness are all admirable and you are not associating with others, maintaining your seclusion and consequently you are enjoying that renunciative happiness, still you cannot say you are a fulfilled person. So, the Supreme goal is uprooting all influxes. You can understand how the Buddha points out the goal. It's not the trivial or petty things that the Buddha has admired. He has always pointed out the Supreme goal, not allowing followers to lag behind in mere, petty results.

*Sīlabbata upādāna*, particularly can happen only to a person who is trying to be virtuous because others are not much concerned about these things. The typical worldlings or people who are more into the pleasure principle, are not much interested in rites, rituals, and observances. People with *Sīlabbata upādāna* are mostly the spiritual people like all of us, who have a spiritual inclination; that is why we are all here. Accordingly, there is a warning here, how our mind can get attached to rites rituals, and observances. Are we blindly following them? Have we done made any verification as to whether these rites rituals, and observances have made the mind more wholesome? Have we done such an evaluation or are we merely following them because our teachers, our parents, our tradition have taught us these?

In this manner, The Buddha beautifully points out free thinking, not simple blind following. Further, he proclaims a wise reflection. Of course it is necessary to follow certain wholesome rites and rituals so that our wholesomeness increases, and the

unwholesomeness diminishes. If that is happening, then it is better to follow them. Only later on we might find out how to maintain a balance. That balancing happens only when you become a stream winner (*sotāpanna*). Till then we would not know the correct proportion even in the wholesome side. Consequently, even when we are following certain wholesome rules, it can give rise to some frustration or it can lead to grasping or an attachment. I must emphasise that, this can happen even with proper rites, rituals and observances, not only the wrong ones like observance as a dog (*kukkuravata*). Of course, we all can understand the wrong ones. But even with the correct ones, we can have grasping till one becomes a stream winner.

We are dealing with very subtle levels here. Previously as very gross levels, we are attached to sights, sounds etc. which are gross, physical. Then the views, (*ditthis*) which are not physical, but strongly and completely pertaining to the mind. Then rites, rituals and observances are even subtler. There are some that are completely wrong and if we follow them, they will lead to lessening of wholesomeness and increasing of unwholesomeness. These we certainly need to give up. But, even when we follow wholesome rites rituals and observances, we have to find the proper balance.

With that, I like to conclude today's Dhamma sermon, hoping to discuss tomorrow, using the same sutta, the last form of grasping and the methods of overcoming all these different forms of grasping.

Thank you very much for the attentive listening.

## Clinging to the sense of “I” *attavāda upādāna*

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa,*

*“cattārimāni, bhikkhave, upādānāni. katamāni cattāri?”*

*kāmupādānaṃ,            diṭṭhupādānaṃ,            sīlabbatupādānaṃ,  
attavādupādānaṃ<sup>13</sup>*

Dear friends in Dhamma,

Yesterday we discussed about three forms of clinging and grasping. Today I will focus on the fourth one: clinging to the sense of “I” (*attavāda upādāna*). We have already discussed *upādāna*, clinging, grasping, holding on to, and strongly attaching. These are different ways that our mind behaves. If we step back and observe our mind constantly, we can see that there is always some kind of occupation, some sort of desire, some sort of attachment, some sort of holding on to. This is the nature of the mind. It does not stop there; it continues again and again incessantly. This grasping causes us to create a different form, an excited state; you feel like you are living, you feel like you are being uplifted, you are living in a different state, and you are enjoying a particular state of mind?. which means that you are born into a particular state; this is what we call *bhava* (*upādāna paccayā bhavo*). When grasping is present, it continues to

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<sup>13</sup> Upādāna sutta (SN 45.108)

grow, shifting you from your present moment to another artificial state of mind. You would enjoy it and cling to it, but ultimately it will end, having gone through all the different forms of unsatisfaction and different forms of *dukkha*, suffering.

When one seeks delight in form, welcomes it, and keeps holding to it, consequently delight arises. Delight in form is clinging.<sup>14</sup> As a result, we lose the present moment. We are now born into a new experience; so we are living in that experience, enjoying it. We have lost the typical, simple, relaxed and unburdened state of mind. Instead, now we have an excited, burdened, artificial and created state of mind.

There are three forms of such clinging; one is *kāma-upādāna*, where we are driven by various sensual desires; we have desires for forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and various ideas; we are pulled to them, attracted to them, and then born into that state and living in a different world - we have lost the present moment.

Then, there is *ditṭhi-upādāna*, where our wrong perceptions lead us to too much thinking in a wrong pattern. This wrong way of thinking ultimately puts us into a fixed, wrong view. It is very difficult to get out of that; the person is strongly attached to it, strongly holding that. We know how even ascetics, monks, and renunciants fight, conflict and quarrel with each other, because of attachment to their views unlike lay people, who are mostly attached to physical things, forms, sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. Even though renunciants can give up material possessions, they can still get into trouble due to their attachment to views and beliefs. Lay people also experience attachment to views, but with a different form of clinging. We discussed the concept of *silabbata upādāna*, where we can become attached to certain rituals, observances, and

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<sup>14</sup> *rūpaṃ abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. tassa rūpaṃ abhinandato abhivadato ajjhosāya tiṭṭhato uppajjati nandī. yā rūpe nandī tadupādāna – Samādhi sutta (SN 22.5)*

traditions, believing them to be correct, true, and one's duty just because it came down from generations or traditions. Thus, we need to understand that only those rituals etc. promoting wholesomeness in the mind and reducing unwholesomeness are the only suitable ones to follow; everything else must be discarded. That is the criterion for us to decide which rules, rituals, and observances are appropriate to follow

Having said that, we can now move on to the fourth type of *upādāna*, which is much subtler and called *attavāda upādāna*. This can literally be translated as clinging to the sense of "I". We individually feel that 'I am, I am living, I am this body, I am suffering, I am unhappy, I am worried, I'm a lustful character, I'm an angry character, I was an angry character but now I am a wise character' etc. Likewise, we are identifying ourselves. I am a certain person, some individual who is here. It is based on this strong notion that we carry on with our lives.

The Buddha explained comprehensively about the Five Aggregates: form (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These represent different elements, either in the past, present or future, gross or subtle, internal or external, far or near, inferior or superior.

Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles all are forms. All the physical things belong to form. This represents our body; our body comes under form. All the other physical things, such as my car, my house, my property, all these physical things come under form on a large scale. We are attached to form and whenever I say, "Okay, I am beautiful," that means I consider my body as beautiful, and I identify with that. So, "I am beautiful" means that my body is being recognized as "I"; likewise, I am tall, I am fat, I am sick. What do you mean when you say you are "sick"? Are you mentally ill or physically ill? Most likely, when you have a fever, you would say, "I am not well. Here, what do you identify as "I"? Is it your body?"



But we don't think like that. You wouldn't tell the doctor, 'My body is sick.' When we tell a doctor, 'I'm not feeling well,' that is how we usually express ourselves, unknowingly thinking that this body is me. 'I have a headache' - the headache belongs to me. So, the headache has a relationship to me, right? That's 'I' as an individual, and that individual has a headache. So that's ownership.

The Buddha explains four types of such identifications per aggregate, thus twenty types of personality views (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) altogether. Immediately recognising the form as self. That means, "I am sick," "I am tall," "I am fat." So that means immediately I equate myself with the body. So, whatever happens to the body, I recognise this as "I am." It is the strongest kind of identification.

On the other hand, a kind of a possession, 'this is my car, this is my torch, this is my watch' or whatever it is. When you possess some physical object, a relationship, possession, belongingness builds up. It's a certain relationship there. So still there is "I" in it, right? I am here and that belongs to me; these are my possessions. Then, I own many things, my possessions are many, and when it is becoming much subtler, there's a large self to which the body belongs, or the body is one large thing to which a small self belongs. Accordingly, these are the different variations that are possible.

Likewise, the Buddha talks about feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) we can recognise all these different aggregates from time to time. That is how we express and how we live. Even though these are technical terms, when we are experiencing different kinds of attachments, we can drill down and see how these recognitions and clinging have happened with respect to a particular aggregate. I am not saying that it is essential to do so, but if you like, you can do it. With these different aggregates we have some relationship; we own it, we possess it, we

think that it belongs to us, or that we are a part of it. Thus, we can have different denominations. Therefore, the Buddha says that personality -view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) generates with respect to these five aggregates in twenty different forms.

We are entangled in many different ways, completely entangled this way or that. Whatever we think, we are being entangled in some manner; we are hooked up either to the form aggregate, or the feelings, or the perceptions, or mental formations. We also can distinctly recognize, for example "this is tasty, this is bitter, this is salty" which is an activity of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is very difficult, like a fish in the water. We are very much engulfed in these attachments and clinging, and with that we express our ideas and communicate with others. We are very much trapped in this personality - view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). So, that is an attachment.

Then, there is another subtle form. Even though one becomes an *Anāgāmi* (non-returner), there is still a sense of "I". Now, suppose one becomes a stream winner (*sotāpanna*). One of the privileges or benefits is that they are rid of this *sakkāya diṭṭhi*. That is something we know, right? We typically memorize *sakkhāya diṭṭhi* (personality view), *vicikicchā* (doubt), *sīlabbata parāmāsa* (adherence to rites and rituals) are the fetters which one overcomes when one becomes a stream winner (*sotāpanna*). When one becomes a *sotāpanna*, these fetters (*saṃyojana*) will not be present. If we look into the different forms of clinging, *diṭṭhi upādāna* will not be present in a *sotāpanna*. Similarly, *sīlabbata upādāna* will also not be present in a *sotāpanna*. Additionally, *sakkhāya diṭṭhi*, personality - view is not present in a *sotāpanna*. How about *kāma upādāna*? It is still there for a stream winner (*sotāpanna*), but not for a Non-Returner (*anāgāmi*). What is the clinging for an Arahant to get rid of, if all other clings (*upādāna*) are gone? There is another subtle form of *attavāda upādāna* called the conceit 'I am' - *asmi māna*, which gives one a sense of "I".

A very interesting incident happened during the Buddha's time about a monk called Khemaka.<sup>15</sup> He was a non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and was very old; he was sick and could not walk. Other elder monks sent a messenger to check on him.

The messenger asked:

"Do you have any recognition of any of the aggregates as yourself?"

He replied: "No".

When elders receive this message, came to the conclusion that ven Khemaka was an Arahant and sent a message again. Once the messenger informed this to ven Khemaka, he replied

"I don't recognize the form aggregate as myself. I don't recognize the feeling aggregate as myself. I don't recognize the perception aggregate as myself. I do not regard anything among these five aggregates subject to clinging as self or as belonging to self, yet I am not an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed."

Then the messenger went to the other side and explained how ven Khemaka said that he does not recognise or identify any of the aggregates as "I", but he still had a sense of "I". Now Another message came to Khemaka seeking further clarification; so it was very difficult to explain and convince the other elders. He got a walking stick and went to their temple. He started to explain, giving an interesting simile.

"Suppose, friends, there is the scent of a blue, red, or white lotus. Would one be speaking rightly if one would say, 'The scent belongs to the petals,' or 'The scent belongs to the stalk,' or 'The scent belongs to the pistils?'"

The elders then answered "No".

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<sup>15</sup> Khemaka sutta (SN 22.89)

“And how should one answer if one is to answer correctly”

“Answering correctly, one should answer: ‘The scent belongs to the entire flower.’”

“Similarly I do not regard any aggregate as ‘This I am’, but the notion ‘I am’ has not yet vanished from me”

Thus ven Khemaka explained.

He further taught others that as one continues to dwell contemplating rise and fall in the five clinging aggregates, the residual conceit ‘I am’ (*asmī’ti, māno*), the desire ‘I am’ (*asmī’ti, chando*), the underlying tendency ‘I am’ (*asmī’ti anusayo*) will also be uprooted.

Therefore, this proves that even to a non-returner, there is a sense of “I.” The Pali term typically used is, “*asmi māna*,” meaning “the conceit, I am.” This is very much the central point: how we operate, how we measure, how we refer, and how we relate ourselves to others. Here I am, there you are—that is very much our pivotal point. It is based on that, all languages, particularly the grammar have been developed. It is very interesting to find that in all languages the word “I” is referred to as “the first person”! which implies that “I” am the most important one!

Now, there is another interesting incident which we can connect here. Venerable Ananda was explaining Dhamma to other monks, recounting how he had been taught by another senior monk, Venerable Puṇṇamantāniputta. He said, with much gratitude, that when he was ordained as a young monk, a novice monk, Venerable Puṇṇamantāniputta had been very helpful to him and had given him an interesting piece of advice.<sup>16</sup>

*upādāya, āvuso ānanda, asmīti hoti, no anupādāya*

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<sup>16</sup> Ānanda sutta (SN 22.83)

“Venerable Ananda, the sense of "I am" happens with respect to some form of clinging; not without clinging”.

It is only when there is some form of clinging is present, that the conceit "I am" arises; never without it. Invariably one has to have some attachment, clinging or grasping to the forms, and it is only then the feeling of "I" would arise (*rūpaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti*). The mind has to be attached to different types of feelings, and it is only then the sense of "I" can arise (*vedanaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti*). Either an attachment to different types of perception must happen for the sense of "I" to arise (*saññāṃ upādāya asmīti hoti*), or a grasping to the different types of formation must happen for the sense of "I" to occur (*sankhāre upādāya asmīti hoti*). Similarly, consciousness must be clung for the sense of "I" to occur (*viññāṇaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti*).

Venerable Puṇṇamantāniputta gives a very interesting simile: Suppose there is a person, either a man or a woman, who likes to live lavishly and to beautify themselves. When they look into a mirror or a very clean, shiny surface, they immediately think

"Here I am! I am beautiful, Oh! here is this little scar, may be a pimple!"

In this way, the sense of "I" is generated. Previously, there was no such reference point. But now, if you stand in front of a mirror, the sense of "I" arises immediately. Venerable Puṇṇamantāniputta mentioned that whenever attachment and grasping occur in relation to forms, the sense of "I" arises. "I" arise with an attachment to feelings of grasping. Likewise, if there is no grasping, then one cannot have the sense of "I". That is the other side that we have to understand. Therefore, if we need to have a sense of "I", then we must invariably have some sort of grasping as a prerequisite.

The Buddha mentioned that certain recluses and brahmins sometimes described different kinds of attachments and grasping to

them. They might be capable of explaining *kāma upādāna*, which is quite obvious, but not the other three. They may might be capable of explaining *kāma-upādāna* and *diṭṭhi upādāna*, not other two and sometimes even *sīlabbata upādāna*, but none of them can explain the last one, *attavāda upādāna*. This was revealed only by the Buddha; being attached to the sense of "I" as an individual or person is something deeply rooted. Even the other religious groups understood that when the mind grasps at certain sensual desires, the mind does feel heavy and crowded, so it is better to leave them aside. So, they renunciate. This renunciation was not done only by Buddhists, but by people of other faiths as well. Likewise, even the other two *upādānas* probably they would have understood, if they are quite capable and skillful, but not the last one. Therefore, the Buddha mentioned that *attavāda upādāna* is something specific that is very subtle in the mind and deeply rooted, and one must recognize it carefully.

*yesaṃ sambodhiyaṅgesu, sammā cittaṃ subhāvitam.  
ādānapaṭinissagge, anupādāya ye ratā.  
khīṇāsavā jutimanto, te loke parinibbutā.*

*Those whose minds have reached full excellence in the factors of  
enlightenment,  
who, having renounced acquisitiveness,  
rejoice in not clinging to things – rid of cankers,  
glowing with wisdom,  
they have attained Nibbana in this very life.*

*Dhammapada - 89*

## Overcoming Grasping

By now we have understood all the different forms of *upādāna* or grasping. Therefore we need to discuss how to eradicate them, not just the last one, but all four *upādāna*. If I come immediately to our typical general practice of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), the Buddha repeatedly emphasised that if one practises *Satipaṭṭhāna*, one would be able to become completely free, not clinging to anything in the world (*anissito ca viharati, na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*). If you practise Mindfulness of body (*kāyānupassanā*), or on feelings (*vēdanānupassanā*), or on mind (*cittānupassanā*), or on phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*), you can reach this state. *Kāyānupassanā*, itself has many different forms of practices, but this is a common result. It doesn't matter if you practise mindfulness on breathing (*ānāpānasati*), or elements meditation (*dhātu manasikāra*), or mindfulness on postures (*iriyāpatha*), you would get the same result.

It doesn't matter what you practice, but one important result in the end is that your mind should be free from all different associations, not clinging to anything in the world. At least temporarily, you should experience it. On top of that, while keeping that as a base, you need to further develop; that is another stage. But during the practice as you continue and progress that non grasping experience should be possible. This should be possible in *vēdanānupassanā*, in *cittānupassanā* and in *dhammānupassanā* as well.



Therefore, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice, we first develop some amount of mindfulness and concentration and use that to focus our attention on various phenomena such as bodily phenomena or feelings or various mental states. We observe them, as to how they arise and pass away.<sup>17</sup> Buddha explains this point again and again. We can see how they are arising and passing away. In certain other suttas, Buddha mentioned that if one is practising like this, seeing how things are arising and passing away with respect to the body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, they will feel unattached with them and the *upādāna* (clinging) as a burden to them.<sup>18</sup> They will not be interested further in it and will feel that there is a way of living without attachment, grasping, holding, or adhering. So, the practice in a way helps us to have a different way of looking at it. That means you come to a conclusion that grasping is troublesome. Previously, grasping had been your very nature, without which you couldn't be. Later, as a result of the practice the whole system changes and now the mind says that grasping is a burden, and the mind now wants to be free from it. It is the mind, but not "I", that is telling this. This is with respect to *Satipaṭṭhāna*. It's a long practice. Though I'm just telling you about it in a few sentences, it's a lifetime practice. For example, if you are practising Mindfulness on breathing (*kāyānupassanā, ānāpānasati*), you first establish your mindfulness on breathing. You recognise its long or short nature and other features. You then develop clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). All these different stages are there, and you can gradually recognise even subtle characteristics, such as how they arise, change, and disappear. Your mind carefully

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<sup>17</sup> *samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati, vāyadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati, samudayavāyadhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati.* - Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta, kāyānupassanā (MN 10)

<sup>18</sup> *upādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassinō viharato upādāne pāṭikulyatā sañṭhāti.* - Nāgita sutta (AN 5.30)

observes all these different changes, their arising, and their passing away.

All of these things develop understanding and wisdom in the mind, and ultimately the mind becomes disinterested, disenchanted and detached from the whole process. As a result, it slowly relinquishes this attachment let it go and now the mind becomes free. This can be a temporary state, but one must recognise it and understand that they were observing different phenomena that were very subtle, arising and passing away quickly, and were impermanent (*anicca*) and subject to suffering and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and that it was beyond their control and nothing substantial in it (*anatta*). Accordingly, some understanding of the three universal characteristics—*Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta*—is now developing in you. As this understanding grows to some extent, the mind will experience occasional releases. Not being interested in this process, now the mind will be released. Now one needs to notice it, recognise the release. Once it is released, one has to dwell there, be present, and experience the release. Instead of jumping purposefully to observe something, one should experience the result and enjoy it. Only then is the mind capable of living in another level, where it is not necessary to have any association, holding, grasping, attachment, or clinging. Without grasping, clinging, or association, the mind is now capable of living and experiencing (*anissitoca viharati, naca kiñci loke upādiyati*).

Again and again, Buddha highlights that it is possible to free all sensual attachments through *kāyānupassanā*.<sup>19</sup> If one practises *kāyānupassanā*, they can free themselves of different *ditṭhi upādāna*, the grasping to various views too. Removing *sīlabbata upādāna* too would be possible by using *kāyānupassanā* because what you are developing is not limited to using the body as the reference point or

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<sup>19</sup> *tassa evaṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato ye gehasitā sarasaṅkappā te pahīyanti.* - Kāyagatāsati sutta (MN 119)

object. The knowledge you gain now can be applied to various other forms of grasping too. It is not limited only to the body now; you can apply it even to feelings as well. You would even be naturally shifting to those areas now. You are experiencing different types of feelings, how they are arising and passing away. You are observing how the mind sometimes grasps certain perceptions; “he’s like that, he’s like this” etc. We think these perceptions are permanent, but that is not true. Instead of holding on to a particular perception, probably you will understand, okay sometimes different mental formations will be there; lust is there, anger is there, jealousy is there etc. Rather than saying that ‘I am an angry person’, you recognize that ‘oh! there is anger present’. Rather than saying that, ‘I am a lustful person’, you acknowledge that there is lust present. Rather than saying that ‘I am jealous’, now you recognize that jealousy is there. These are all defilements, or mental formations.

Now we look at things in a different way; instead of identifying with them, we try to look at them objectively. We no longer recognise them as "I am," instead we see them as they are, or try to see them as they truly are. Love is love. Hatred is hatred hate. Entanglement is entanglement. Jealousy is jealousy. It is not my jealousy, or I am jealous. It is just jealousy. Therefore, now we are looking at them all in their proper form. Likewise, by continuing such practice, you can slowly diminish all these different defilements. *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice itself is capable of making one free from three fetters: *sakkāya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicchā*, and *silabbata parāmāsa* and make one a stream-winner (*sotāpanna*). It can even take one to the Once-Returner level, Non-Returner level, and even to Arahantship. So, all four *Satipaṭṭhānas*, being the direct path (*ekāyana magga*) are quite capable of providing a complete methodology to free one from the different forms of grasping.

Not only that, there are also different other methods mentioned by the Buddha that one can undertake. I just wanted to highlight *Satipaṭṭhāna* since all of us are practising it. There is

another sutta that I like to pay your attention. One time the King of Gods, Sakka, came to ask a question from the Buddha. He said, "Bhante, people are practising, monks are practising, and some are attaining enlightenment, nibbāna, but others are not attaining nibbāna. Why is this?" Sakka asked a very interesting question indeed.<sup>20</sup> Then the Buddha answered;

*santi kho, devānaminda, cakkhuvīññeyyā rūpā, itṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā...*

Therefore, what the Buddha mentioned is that these different, interesting forms are present; they are quite desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, and tantalising. You can remember how we get attracted to them; they are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, and tantalising, and we can become pretty trapped. We liked them because they have all of these inherent qualities: pleasing, tantalising, beautiful, and lovely. So, what happens, as a result of being delighted with it? (*abhinandati*), You welcome it (*abhivadati*) and strongly hold onto it, adhere to it (*ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati*). And as a result the consciousness is now established there (*tannissitaṃ viññāṇaṃ hoti*). Now, consciousness is clinging and grasping to what it has identified with (*tadupādānaṃ*). The consciousness is now attached to that; so what happens next? If consciousness is attached to something, that certainly prevents one from attaining nibbāna (*saupādāno, devānaminda, bhikkhu no parinibbāyati*).

So, where will you keep your consciousness at the time of your death? Do you have a plan for this now? If your consciousness is attached to forms, can you say that you will not remember your house, which you have built with a lot of effort and have spent millions or billions on? Can you leave it behind when you are

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<sup>20</sup> *ko nu kho, bhante, hetu, ko paccayo yena midhekacce sattā diṭṭheva dhamme no parinibbāyanti? ko pana, bhante, hetu, ko paccayo yena midhekacce sattā diṭṭheva dhamme parinibbāyanti"ti? - Sakkapañha sutta (SN 35.101)*

dying? How about other forms such as your car, your land, your beautiful house to which your consciousness might attach at the time of your death? There are many things for us to get attached to. So, whenever our mind gets attached to something, it is holding, grasping that. As a result, it is established there, and we cannot attain Nibbāna. That's as simple as that.

Suppose there is a strong pain, suffering, or cancer, and we are struggling and fighting against it, asking "why did it happen to me?". We are holding onto that and even blame and hate others. Where is our consciousness established? With feelings. Can we ever attain Nibbāna? We can see the gravity of this situation. We need to reveal this through Dhamma. Then why are we constantly travelling in this *saṃsāra*? So, the solution has to be found before death. You have to find a solution before death, a solution that keeps the mind free from attachment, free from grasping, and free from holding things without allowing consciousness to establish before death. We need to practise, as it might not happen immediately. Even though you know Dhamma, or have heard these things, you can't tell your consciousness not to do it. Even at this moment, if you are attached to something and you feel burdened, you feel unhappy, tight. That's the problem.

When people become attached to something and hold onto it, they feel happy. This can be a problem, as they become more attached and continue to cling onto it, they remain in a state of delight. You don't think that attachment generates unhappiness, stress, or burden; instead, you think that holding, grasping, generates delight. It has some delight and that is why we continue. But as we continue with the practice, the mind starts feeling difficult to bear; it becomes more and more sensitive and now it can't bear grasping. It feels burdened when it is grasping. When it holds strongly, the mind feels tight, burdened and then naturally the

mind wants to release it. So, this has to happen, which is why Buddha mentioned it in the Nāgita Sutta.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, when one continues the practice, they will see again and again the arising and passing away of different aggregates, and this will make clinging to them impossible. Now you don't like clinging; you don't prefer the clinging mind, as it feels heavy and gross, because you have experienced a released, lighter, unattached, simplified and unentangled state of mind. With respect to that, the grasped state of mind feels more burdened and heavier. Therefore, through our practice, we need to come to a non-grasping unentangled simplified and unconstructed state. We need to experience, recognise, appreciate, and dwell in that state to understand that.

“I was in a wrong place. I was in a grasping state, a burdened state. Now that I understand, why can't we stay in this state?”.

Accordingly, the practice leads us in a direction where the mind becomes more and more interested in non-grasping. Then, the process of letting go, renunciation, relinquishment becomes an increasingly natural request coming from the mind itself. Therefore, the Buddha explained this to the god Sakka, saying that there are interesting things, loveable things, desirable things, agreeable things, pleasing things, and sensually enticing things, tantalising things, but, now this practitioner does not find delight in them (*nābhinandati*), does not welcome them (*nābhivadati*), does not adhere to them, and does not merge into them (*nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati*).

At times practitioners experience this, don't they? Say, you are doing your walking practice. Assume that immediately a beautiful butterfly is visible. Can't you simply keep your awareness

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<sup>21</sup> *upādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassino viharato upādāne pāṭikulyatā saṅghāti*. - Nāgita sutta (AN 5.30)

with yourself or even unestablished? Suppose you are now capable of that, and you are simply walking in a more relaxed state of mind. There is no grasping; your mind is very clear. Nothing is trembling, nothing is clouded in the mind; there is great clarity in the mind. Now, a beautiful picture, such as a butterfly, is seen. Then what happens? Are you going and clinging to that, grasping it, or are you maintaining clarity of mind? You can do it can't you? experienced practitioners can do it naturally, without doing it intentionally. Now the mind is not interested in it. The mind recognises that this is a butterfly, this is a monkey, this is a waterfall, etc., and it is beautiful, but the clarity of mind remains. That is how the Buddha's advised to Bāhiya:

in the seen there will be merely the seen (*ditṭhe ditṭhamattaṃ bhavissati*);

in the heard there will be merely the heard (*sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati*);

in the sensed by the nose, tongue and body there will be merely the sensed (*mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati*);

in the cognized there will be merely the cognized (*viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*).<sup>22</sup>

Maybe different thoughts come to your mind, but you are not entangled; you are released, maintaining the clarity and the unattached nature of the mind, unassociated nature of the mind. You can do it. Today, (during the questions and answer session) some Yogis said:

'Things are there, but I am not interested; the mind prefers to stay alone, secluded, and unattached'.

The Buddha mentioned, if you are able to maintain that state of mind, then the consciousness is not associating with what you

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<sup>22</sup> Bāhiya sutta (KN 3.10)

have seen, heard, sensed, or thought (*na tannissitaṃ viññānaṃ hoti*). It is not attached or established there (*na tadupādānaṃ*). Now, the consciousness is not grasping that. If the mind is not grasping or attaching, then that mind can attain Nibbāna (*anupādāno, devānaminda, bhikkhu parinibbāyati*). It's not that difficult!

However, if you are able to maintain that state of mind, can we say that if sudden death happens, one can attain Nibbāna? Not that easy. There is another problem here, that's called latent tendencies (*anusaya*). That is what we discussed yesterday. Even though we have *samādhi* and seclusion, the mind still has the potential to generate an attachment and is still not free. Certain tendencies and influxes are there in the mind; therefore, even though the mind is free from thinking and does not plan, still there is a risk of getting attached due to latent tendencies. Anytime, maybe at the moment of death, or even before that, the risk is there and consequently, one will be reborn.<sup>23</sup>

Since that potential is still there, the practice must be further developed until all these tendencies and potentials completely fade away. That is why it takes time. Moreover, we need to reach the first stage where we experience a state of release, even if it is only temporary, for one minute, two minutes, five minutes, or ten minutes perhaps. A state where, there are no attachments or grasping at least temporarily, and one can then recognise that the mind can stay in this state. The mind does not want any establishment or substratum; such a thing is not necessary for the mind at this point. The mind can maintain some sort of a buoyancy. This is something that yogis would experience due to their systematic practice. Once we experience this, we need to notice it, encourage it and appreciate it. We need to remember that this is the

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<sup>23</sup> *no ce, bhikkhave, ceteti no ce pakappeti, atha ce anuseti, ārammaṇametaṃ hoti viññānaṃssa ṭhitiyā. ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññānaṃssa hoti. tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatim̐ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti. - Cetanā sutta (SN 12.38)*



point that somehow we have missed. Without the Buddha's teachings, we would not be able to appreciate it or even recognise it. In a way, I don't think we would be able to understand it, since there is no sense of "I" at this stage. The Buddha's teachings and encouragement help us to give some prominence to it, even if it appears boring. So, we are encouraged to dwell there and spend some time there.

Otherwise, we simply get up and ask ourselves,

"What the heck is this? I feel bored; there's no encouragement, no happiness, no excitement. I'd better do some walking or put my attention on my breath. What am I doing, just doing nothing? Just being. What's the point?"

That's what the mind will tell. But the Buddha, on the other hand, encourages us to just dwell there, just be there, and not do anything. So, "JUST BE", is the shortest instruction, yet the most difficult one to do.

Another interesting point is how we are constantly being delighted by different beautiful things; it may be forms, feelings, perceptions etc. Whenever we become attached to them, get established there, become delighted with it and welcome it, adhere to it, we grasp it and become "someone". We are born into a new state and that is the becoming (*bhava*); grasping leads to becoming (*upādāna paccayā bhavō*).

That means there is a process of becoming. There is always a desire to become something or someone. Let us say, currently one is not happy. 'I want to become this; I want to become that'. There is an internal feeling of dissatisfaction. 'I want that; only if I have that, I'll be happy'. Suppose you obtain that, then you grasp it, enjoy it, you are born to it, so that is the state of *bhava*, the becoming, and then the rest of the series of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*) follows. So again and again we get into this cycle, the

cycle of rebirth. We can experience it momentarily in a particular incident, and on a larger scale in another life. The same principle can be applied to the next incident, or to the next life.

But if one is not attached to it, if one does not continue to be delighted, adhere, or welcome it, one will feel detached, secluded, and not interested. If one can maintain that, one does not continue accumulating different aggregates. If one can do this, then your practice will advance to a new phase. Previously, it was very much focused on purposeful, deliberate, and effortful practice. Now one has recognised that the mind can stay at least for some time without attachment, without grasping, without holding on to things. Let the mind be there and dwell there. While you are there, you can observe what the mind is doing in a relaxed manner and may even question why the mind can't stay like this. Why does it keep going back and grasping again? Now, because of your practice, you have been able to reach a level where the mind is not grasping, for perhaps fifteen minutes. So why does it return to grasping after fifteen minutes? So, we need to investigate this. We need to investigate our own minds. It's like catching a leech and putting it on a pillow. Why can't it stay there when the pillow is more pleasant and even smells good? Why does it keep jumping and going back to the mud? This indicates the latent tendencies in our minds.

Likewise, even though one can stay for about 15 minutes or half an hour unattached, they will slowly go and latch on to something, lean on to something, or attach to something, even to a *samādhi* or a concentrated state. Therefore, don't think that the concentrated state is completely free from attachment.<sup>24</sup> That is why

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<sup>24</sup> *Example case-* "And how, friends, is the mind called 'stuck internally'? Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. If his consciousness follows after the rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, is tied and shackled by gratification in the

we need to be very relaxed and careful, maintaining a delicate balance. Only then can we observe how the mind is behaving, as this is a very subtle practice. That is why the Buddha mentioned that our practice should be oriented towards seclusion (*vivekanissitaṃ*). This does not mean that you are asking all your family members to go away! But if the mind naturally goes and attaches, you prefer seclusion - not being attached, not being held, not being latched on to something, leaning onto something, but just be secluded, being alone. Then *virāganissitaṃ* – one is not interested and one feels dispassionate towards various events. There is an invitation for a party, but one is not interested. Even if something looks beautiful or sounds great, still one is not interested; dispassionate, *virāganissitaṃ*.

Then *nirodhanissitaṃ*, living in that state of cessation, not experiencing ups and downs or wobbling, just staying calm. No "I" formations and slowly fading off the craving - so basically, the *nirodha* has different explanations. One can experience arising and passing away of some phenomena, and you are promoting the passing away side, that is one aspect. More than that, without forming a sense of "I", you have stopped - the mind has stopped, rather than running around. We were constantly in a race - how about stopping now? Where are you running to? To the next election? We are constantly running, is that right?

Always we all have something to do; in fact, not "some thing" but many, many things to do – am I right? At this moment, we are wondering when this sermon will end there is something for you to do afterwards. 'I have something important to do immediately, when this monk finishes this sermon'. You have something to do. We still have some running thoughts. So, when are we going to stop? When will you feel that 'I am done'? Nothing

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rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, then his mind is called 'stuck internally.'" - Uddesavibhaṅga sutta (MN 138)

else to do? Only an arahant can do that; For him, there is nothing else that needs to be done (*kata karaṇīyo*). Whatever needs to be done, the arahant has completed. That's it; absolutely nothing else. We always have something to do, so tomorrow I am planning to go back to Nissarana Vanaya. Tomorrow morning, there is a Dhamma sermon, and still more projects. Bhante Dhammajiva has already met the Minister, and he is now planning the next event of Sati Pasala! Many projects, and we are constantly going from one event to the next. Constantly and endlessly running.

When are we going to give our minds some rest? Through the practice, we have found a restful state. What are you doing? What are we supposed to do? Let us ask ourselves these questions. If we find ourselves in a situation where our mind has stopped, what will we do next? You ask, "Bhante, what's next? What am I supposed to do next?" and you are in the best form, in the perfect situation, so you have to be happy. You have done it; your mind has come back home. You were idling and roaming here and there, searching for some kind of satisfaction, looking for happiness, getting frustrated in the process and ultimately burning out. But ultimately it came back home. Now, what are you supposed to do? Stay at home. Just maintain it. Be happy with what you have achieved. But we don't feel that way. We feel unsatisfied, unfulfilled, incomplete; always we feel that there is something more available, something more to do, something that is lacking. So, that is the formation; that is the delusion; that is the *Māra* trying to tempt us to do more and more, not to stay, not to be. So, "just being" is very, very difficult. Not doing anything is extremely difficult, almost impossible. So, through the practice, once you are able to recognise that, try to JUST BE. Don't stress yourself. Don't encourage anything else, just enjoy inner silence. Just enjoy the stillness, and then that is *nirodha*. Just be. Just enjoy the complete stillness. No formations. *vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggaparīṇāmiṃ*.

So, always maturing in release, the whole practice leading to release (*vossaggapariṇāmiṃ*). Maturing in release. You were doing various things, and at the end, you come to release, a kind of emptiness, with no attachments. The mind is released, and we have freedom, but we don't know how to enjoy this freedom, be in this freedom, or dwell in this freedom. Our minds have much momentum. Always running, running, running, always asking this and that, doing, doing, doing, and even when we come to the end, we can't stop, as we are used to running. Suppose you are participating in a race of 200 meters. With a lot of effort, you are running, running, running. You come to the end and even then you can't stop. The momentum is still at work. You keep on running because you are used to running. In *samsāra*, we are running, running, running from this life to that, from that life to still another. Even in this life, from our childhood to our young age, and until now, we are running from this to that. Through the practice, we eventually come to a complete stop, but still we want to run. When are we going to stop? When do we feel "this is enough"? When do we think,

"Okay, this is it. I am there. I am at home. Let me enjoy, let me take a rest. Have a ginger tea, or maybe a black tea. Just enjoy."

So, maturing in release. So, the mind is released. So, the entire practice takes us to the release, and maturing in release. Once it is released, if we don't know how to be there, then we are lost.

Therefore, the Buddha mentioned in different ways that, of course, one must further practice: You are developing mindfulness in a more relaxed manner. It is not that you are purposely, deliberately and with much effort practising mindfulness; rather, it is becoming more effortless. You may investigate from time to time, but more in an effortless and relaxed manner. What do you expect to gain from this investigation? Expect what? Expect release,

maturity in release. What will you do once you are released? Just be. Just stop.

With respect to all the enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅgā*) the Buddha mentioned the same.

*idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu*

*satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ  
nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.*

*dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ  
virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ. ...<sup>25</sup>*

In the Upādāna sutta, with respect to the Noble Eightfold path the Buddha mentioned;

“Monks, in order to have direct knowledge about the four types of clinging (*abhiññāya*), in order to have a full understanding of them (*pariññāya*), in order to completely destroy these graspings (*parikkhayāya*), and in order to abandon all of them (*pahānāya*), the noble Eightfold Path has to be developed”.<sup>26</sup>

How?

*sammādiṭṭhiṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ  
nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.*

*sammāsaṃkappaṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ  
nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ....*

For each and every path Factor, the Buddha repeats;

<sup>25</sup> Ānāpānassati sutta (MN 118)

<sup>26</sup> *imesaṃ kho, bhikkhave, catunnaṃ upādānānaṃ abhiññāya pariññāya  
parikkhayāya pahānāya, ariyō aṭṭhaṃgikō maggo bhavē tabbō.*

- Upādānasutta (SN 45.108)

*vivekanissitaṃ                      virāganissitaṃ                      nirodhanissitaṃ*  
*vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.*

Obviously there is something that we have missed. We kept striving, striving, never knowing how to stop, how to dwell, how to be, how to simply look, or how to be at home. Therefore, to overcome all these types of clinging, we have to do this practice. Practising more inclined towards seclusion and more into dispassion, more into stilling formations, and maturing in release, dwelling in release or emptiness.

These are the very crucial facts that I wish to mention. All these things tell us that we are continuously going through a process of grasping, which has resulted in us being burdened. Consequently, we've been suffering again and again. It is now high time to develop a methodology, a practice to understand and recognise this, and ultimately let go of all things, reaching a state of release. Enjoy that release, be in that release, and eventually be released from grasping and associating. It is not that we practise now and attain a non-grasping state in the future; we practise now and experience a non-grasping state now itself. Therefore, the practice is now. AND, the result too is here and now. At this very moment, if there is grasping present in the mind, we should be mindful of it. Mindfulness will tell us that there is grasping, there is a burden, that we feel frustrated, we feel unhappy, and grasping is present. Mindfulness will indicate that. It is our duty to relinquish it, abandon it, let it go, and then be free, dwell in freedom, and be in stillness. That is it!

With that, I would like to conclude today's Dhamma sermon, and thank you very much for your attentive listening.

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