Paticca Samuppada Sermon 19
The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 201)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti sabbaṁ āhāra paccayā

ahārānaṁ nirodhena natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā dukkhaṁ āhāra paccayā

sabbāhāraṁ pariññāya sabbāhāramanissito

Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya āsavānaṁ parikkhayā

saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Life of beings is dependent on food. But concealed within food is found craving which increases the misery of existence. As a result, the Buddha was compelled to present to the world an extraordinary vision based on nutriment. Full expression is given to this vision in three of the verses in the *Dvayatanupassanā Sutta* in the *Sutta Nipāta* which I have selected as the topic of this 19th discourse on the Law of Dependent Arising.

In several of our earlier discourses we have drawn your attention to the style of presentation in this *sutta*. To state briefly, it is a style of presenting facts for the contemplation of the nature of arising and ceasing. In this context the Buddha presents, for the first time, the method of dual contemplation on nutriment with regard to arising and ceasing aspects. He introduces it as follows:

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever suffering arises, all that has nutriment as condition. This is one mode of contemplation. With the total detachment and cessation of grasping towards nutriments, suffering ceases to be. This is the second mode of contemplation. A monk who practices this dual technique of contemplation, striving hard to burn out the defilements (*kilesa*) with vigilance, can

expect one of these two rewards, either Arahanthood in this very life or the attainment of a non-returner in case a trace of grasping remains."

The above three verses were uttered to clarify this point further.

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti – sabbaṁ āhāra paccayā

Whatever suffering arises, all that is dependent on nutriment.

ahārānaṁ nirodhena – natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

With the cessation of nutriment, there is no arising of suffering.

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – dukkhaṁ āhāra paccayā

Knowing the consequences of suffering dependent on nutriment

sabbāhāraṁ pariññāya – sabbāhāramanissito

With complete understanding of nutriment, with detachment towards nutriment

Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya – āsavānaṁ parikkhayā

With the perfect understanding of health, through the elimination of influxes

saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho – saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu

The Arahant who has the threefold higher knowledge and is firmly established in the Dhamma, does not come into reckoning.

The vision on nutriment presented in these three verses is extremely deep. The *Āhāra Sutta* of the *Āhāra Vagga* in the *Āhāra Saṁyutta* found in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* presents a totally different attitude towards nutriment than that of the ordinary world. This is how the Buddha explains it to the monks:

"*Cattārome bhikkhave āhārā bhūtānaṁ vā sattānaṁ ṭhitiyā sambhavesīnaṁ vā anuggahāya. Katame cattāro? Kabaliṁkāro āhāro oḷāriko vā sukhumo vā, phasso dutiyo, manosañcetanā tatiyā, viññāṇaṁ catutthaṁ.*"

"Monks, there are four types of nutriments available for the maintenance of beings born, and for the welfare of those seeking birth. What are they? Material food either gross or soft, that can be made into lumps. Contact is the second. Mental intentions is the third. Consciousness is the fourth."

The root cause for all four, according to the Buddha is craving.

"*Ime ca bhikkhave cattāro āhārā taṇhā nidānā taṇhā samudayā taṇhā jātikā taṇhā pabhavā.*"

"These four types of nutriments have craving as the root cause, craving as the reason for arising, craving as the place of origin and craving as the place of birth."

We come across another amazing account on this subject in the simile of 'the flesh of a son' in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta*. Although we have made general references to it earlier, I hope to analyse it now in direct reference to the Law of Dependent Arising. In this discourse on the "flesh of a son" capable of arousing intense emotions, the Buddha presents some valuable facts, as good as objects of meditation, in condensed form.

Let me first quote the Buddha word as it is.

"Monks, imagine a couple who enters a desert track with their only loving son, equipped with a small quantity of simple requirements. Halfway through, finding their food exhausted the couple confidentially surveying their plight decided to kill the son. They killed their only son, made an edible preparation of the flesh and the fleshy bones and managed to traverse the rest of the journey. Had they not killed the son, all three would have perished. But as they ate the meat, being overpowered by intense grief they beat their chests lamenting "Where is our only son."

At the end of the narrative the Buddha asked the monks a question.

"Monks, what do you think? Did those parents consume their only son's flesh as a sport or enjoyment? For strength or appearance or adornment?"

"Certainly not" replied the monks.

"Monks, did not the parents consume the flesh of the child, merely to cross over the desert?" (make note of the term merely).

"Yes Venerable Sir" responded the monks.

The fable ends there. Now the Buddha sets about to drive home the hard facts related to food.

"Monks, gross food has to be treated as illustrated in the simile. It has its rewards. A deep understanding of gross material food, partaken of in lumps, is equal to an understanding of lust in relation to the five-fold sensuality. The noble disciple who grasps this fact of reality will attain the fruit of a Non-returner. He will not return to this world."

That is the Buddha's teaching.

At this point, we are compelled, though reluctantly, to expose the immature childish story replaced by the commentator which underestimates the significance of the Buddha's message. What did the man and wife traversing the desert do when they ran out of food? They sat down under a particular tree with few leaves and had a confidential discussion. The husband said,

"We have no more food. It is not possible to provide for you by farming or trade. The only possible solution is for you to kill me, and reach your destination, with the child."

Then the wife replied,

“I am unable to earn a living in this desert by an occupation such as weaving thread. So I suggest that you kill me, and cross the desert with the child.”

To this the husband responded,

“The child will not survive if the mother is dead. The only obvious alternative is to kill the child and feed on the flesh until we cross the desert. If we survive we have the possibility of getting another son. Agreeing to this plan, the mother sent the son to the father.

Recalling the trouble he went through, in order to bring him up, the father refused to kill him, and sent him back to the mother.

Thinking of the innumerable prayers offered to the gods and the pain she bore for ten months, the mother couldn’t kill the son. The boy walking between the mother and the father continuously – but mind you under that tree with few leaves – fell down dead. Then the parents after much lamenting and grieving, fed on the flesh.

Do you notice how the sensitivity found in the Buddha’s story has been revised in the second? I would like to add my comments here. Those who read the Dhamma and the *Vinaya* today in Sinhala hear of this childish story only. Can you see how the Buddha’s teachings are undermined? Perhaps the commentators feared that the earlier story would encourage parents to kill their children. But the Buddha’s intention was to show how dangerous the desire for food taken as a whole can be. The idea here is very deep indeed. In case you, my listeners, too have your doubts, let me annex another simile here.

You may have perhaps read the Buddha’s simile on *Dhātumanasikāra* (attention on the primaries) about a butcher. A certain butcher or his apprentice slaughters a cow, slices it and sells it at a crossroad. Nobody thinks of the flesh in terms of a cow. Similarly, says the Buddha, a meditator should survey his own body by dissecting into the four elements earth, water, fire and wind. Thereby the Buddha doesn’t encourage slaughter of animals. It is only a simile. A butcher is a merciless person who slaughters, cuts into parts and sells cattle with cruelty. The Buddha’s advice was to dissect the body one loves into the four elements as an object of contemplation. That is the message behind the simile.

Another doubt crops up regarding the simile of the son’s flesh. Since vegetarianism and meat-eating are common subjects for discussion today, one might misunderstand this as an approval of meat-eating. The sole purpose of the simile here is to expose the danger concerning food in general. When discussing this topic once, I said if a grain of rice on our plate could speak, it would pour out the painful experience of misery in its life. With the introduction of agrochemicals that terminate thousands of insects, the

grain of rice will not only complain but shed bitter tears, if it was possible. On the whole, food is a source of unhappiness. The purpose of the above simile was to bring about disillusionment regarding gross or delicate food, partaken of in lumps whether with or without meat. It must not be misinterpreted. I will touch on this again later.

Let us move on to contact as nutriment (*phassāhāra*).

"How, Monks, must contact as nutriment be understood? Imagine a cow with infected skin? (*niccammā gāvī*?"

The reference is not to a totally skinned cow in the slaughter house but to a cow with exposed wounds due to skin infection. If this cow stands by a wall, insects there would attack the wounds. If she rests under a tree, the insects on the tree would attack her. If she gets into the water, insects in the water would harass her. In an open area, animal life associated with the sky would inflict pain on her.

Wherever the cow is, she has no escape.

"That is how 'contact nutriment' should be understood" says the Buddha. If correctly understood, it's advantages are many. First it gives a profound understanding of the three aspects of feeling (*vedanā*) as pleasant, painful and neither pleasant nor painful. If a noble disciple reaches this level of understanding, nothing more remains for him to do. He becomes an Arahant. The Buddha reveals the strength of feeling (*vedanā*) as an object of meditation.

Considering the depth of the simile, I would like to offer a brief commentary here. We know that feeling is dependent on contact. Bodily contact rests entirely on the soft skin, as we all know. Let's imagine we have a wound on the right arm. A slight rub on the left arm with a velvet cloth brings immense comfort but the same impact on the right arm will cause the arm to be withdrawn with pain. Condensing and simplifying the statement of the Buddha, one could say he is comparing the pleasant feeling on the skin and the painful feeling on the raw flesh. In the ultimate sense, the skin is a mere bandage round a wound. If the entire body is a wound, a disease, and an ulcer, the skin is the bandage, as taught in the contemplation of impurities (*asubha bhāvanā*) as *gaṇḍabhūto, roga bhūto, vaṇa bhūto*. This subject of meditation leads one to disillusionment regarding contact and the attainment of *Nibbāna*. That is the nutriment of contact.

The next is mental intentions as food (*mano saṁcetanā āhāra*). How Monks should the food of mental intentions be identified?"

Another simile is given here deep in meaning. There is a pit of burning embers as deep as the height of a man. It emits no smoke or flames. A man who longs to live but fears death, longs for enjoyment but fears pain, approaches this pit. Two strong men grip him by his arms and drag him towards the pit. Although he is physically drawn towards the

coal pit, his intention (*cetanā*), his aspiration (*patthanā*), his resolve (*paṇidhi*) is bent away from it. He wriggles about but is dragged on. That is the simile. Next the Buddha applies it to the subject.

“Monks, that is how mental intentions should be understood. The noble disciple who has the full understanding of the nutriment of mental intentions, will attain full realization of the craving for sensuality, the craving for existence and the craving of annihilation (*kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā, vibhava taṇhā*). To him who reaches this level of purity, Arahanthood is certain.

Here too a short commentary seems necessary. What is the painful nature of mental intentions? Here is an example. We have to find the money tomorrow to settle a heavy loan. Can we fall asleep relaxed tonight? We might toss and turn in bed and our thoughts might torment us. Mental intentions (*mano saṁcetanā*) will drag us away forcibly. Here is another example. The deer runs after the mirage due to craving. Due to craving for water. It runs due to the deception there is water. It keeps running. Although too exhausted to keep running, it drags itself forward, prompted by craving. Watching the behaviour of mental intentions, one can understand the nature of craving. I think that is enough about *mano saṁcetanā*.

The last one, nutriment of consciousness is the most subtle of the four.

“Monks, how would you understand the nutriment of consciousness? (*viññāṇa āhāra*). This is the simile given. “The ministers or the executioners catch hold of a criminal and present him before the king for the final verdict. In the morning, the king orders that a hundred stabs be inflicted on him with a sharp knife (known as *aḍayaṭi*). At noon the king is informed that the criminal was still alive. A repetition of the punishment is ordered. Again in the evening another round of hundred stabs was inflicted on him. Now the Buddha questions the monks,

“Monks, what do you think? Does this man who is inflicted with three hundred stabs a day with a sharp knife, experience pain? “Why not Venerable Sir? Even a single stab would definitely bring pain and distress on him.”

The simile ends there. The Buddha says “That is how, Monks, the nutriment of consciousness should be understood. A thorough understanding of the nutriment of consciousness will lead to the understanding of name-and-form. The noble disciple who reaches this level of understanding has nothing more to do. That is the nutriment of consciousness, the most difficult to comprehend. No one likes to treat consciousness as misery. In place of the *aḍayaṭi* story a simple but modern illustration will make this clear.

TV addicts face continuous attacks from morning till night not with the *aḍayaṭi* of ancient times but – If I may coin a new word to suit modern times – with the 'ad'-yati blows leveled against them by the business executioner of the commercial world.

Here is another illustration. When you enter a street at night, electric bulbs in some business places keep winking so as to draw our attention, and to tempt us through subtle devices. The worldlings cannot realise the misery within this, due to the presence of consciousness. We have come through *Saṁsāra* suffering severe *aḍayaṭi* blows but totally ignorant of name-and-form, the mischief-maker behind it. The meditators have to understand the rest through meditation. He who realizes fully the functioning of the nutriment of consciousness, attains Arahanthood.

Let me emphasize another aspect on the subject of nutriments. Life depends on nutriments. We cannot do without it. What follows is deep. You know the Buddha spent six years of physical torture. The Nigaṇṭhas advocated self-mortification as the only way to happiness. Self-mortification was the most favoured path both among the ascetics and Brahmins. So naturally, the Buddha too went to its extreme until he collapsed by fasting. Through trial and error he realized the only solution to suffering was the middle path.

We have discussed earlier a *sutta* that discusses the middle path, which we wish to touch on briefly. Once a certain Bhikkhunī, instigated by hidden evil intentions, invited Venerable Ananda on the pretext of listening to a discourse. Venerable Ananda, reading her mind, delivered a discourse based on four sub-topics. The first topic is very much relevant to us.

This is how it is presented.

"*Āhāra sambhūto bhagini ayaṁ kāyo. Āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*."

"Sister, this body is made up of nutriment. With the help of nutriment, should nutriment be eliminated."

It is a puzzling statement but the middle path lies therein. Venerable Ananda gives a brief explanation as to how nutriment can be instrumental in eliminating nutriment. You listeners are familiar with these facts. Monks are advised not to avoid food totally but to contemplate while partaking of food. With a clear perspective of the purpose of eating, it has to be converted into a subject of meditation through the restraint of wisdom (*ñāṇa samvara*). A monk when partaking of food, contemplates as follows with wisdom.

"I partake of this food not for enjoyment or strength or adornment or beautification (*paṭisaṇkhā yoniso, neva davāya, na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*) – merely (*yāvadeva*) – for the maintenance of this body (*imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā*) – for survival (*yāpanāya*) – to refrain from destruction to life (*vihiṁsūparatiya*) – for the fulfillment of higher life (*brahmacariyānuggahāya*). I shall thus dispel the pain of hunger and prevent

the arising of any future pain by overeating (*iti purāṇaṁ ca vedanaṁ paṭikankhāmi, navañca vedanaṁ na uppādessāmi*). In this journey of life, I shall deviate from wrong, being frugal in food and other requirements (*yātrā ca me bhavissati*).

To this noble quest in life, meditative monks add a subject of meditation. Its purpose is indicated as follows; "This food is merely a speck of the elements (*dhātu mattako*). It is a preparation consisting of earth, water, heat and wind. Taken in terms of elements it is clean but after entering this putrid body (*imaṁ pūtikāyaṁ patvā*) it becomes extremely repulsive (*ativiya jigucchanīyo jāyati*). This statement includes both subjects of meditation, contemplation on the elements and the repulsiveness of food. That is how food is converted into a subject of meditation.

Finally contemplation on the elements leads to emptiness (*suññatā*). This mere speck of the elements is essenceless (*dhātu mattako suñño*).

This almsfood is subject to conditionality. The individual partaking of it is not a being or a living entity, but an essenceless speck of the elements. This almsfood which is not loathsome becomes extremely repulsive after entering this body.

Yathāpaccayaṁ pavattamānaṁ dhātumattamevetaṁ yadidaṁ piṇḍapāto. Tadupabhuñjakoca puggalo dhātumattako nissatto nijjīvo suñño. Sabbo panāyaṁ piṇḍapāto ajigucchanīyo. imaṁ pūtikāyaṁ patvā ativiya jigucchanīyo jāyati.

This almsfood as a requisite is nothing but a speck from the elements. He who partakes of it is not a being or a living thing but a mere empty speck of elements. This almsfood though clean would become extremely repulsive, once inside the foul body.

This clarifies how one realizes the void (essencelessness) through contemplation on the elements. Contemplation on repulsiveness leads one to disillusion, letting go. Freedom from food, elimination of food is suggestive of the dispelling of craving. There lies the Middle Path. The *Sabbāsava Sutta* further clarifies this point. As we proceed in life we encounter certain things we can neither manage with nor without. The Buddha realized that food is one such requirement. The middle path has to be followed regarding food. Instead of rejecting it altogether, one partakes of food perfectly aware of its limitations, (*mattaññū*) with *Nibbāna* as the goal. Many other similes can be cited that are extremely effective in causing disillusionment towards food.

Khuraṁva madhunālittaṁ and *khuradhārūpamo bhava* are two wonderful similes mentioned earlier. A man fond of honey is offered a generous dose of it spread on a razor blade. He cannot enjoy it without risking his tongue. This simile helps to eliminate the greed for taste. Partaking of food is similar to applying medication on a wound (*vaṇasssa ropanatthāya*) and lubricating the axle of the cart (*akkhassabbhañjanaṁ yathā*) are two similes that clarify the place of food on the path to *Nibbāna*. Food is not a source of pleasure but an essential commodity to carry the five aggregates across the

desert of *Saṁsāra* safely, not different from oiling the axle of a wheel. The simile of the son's flesh is also applicable here, although it stirs the emotions as well. The Buddha explains the repulsive nature of food inside the body and the importance of adopting the middle path with regard to food.

It is further explained in such *suttas* as the *Ogha Taraṇa Sutta*. If a person, on getting into a river with a strong current, to cross over, stops there without moving, he will sink. If he wriggles about, he'll get washed away. Wriggling is compared to self mortification, or rejecting all food. Stopping is compared to self indulgence, or endless consumption of food. Avoiding both these extremes, one should eat only what is required for survival.

'*Mattaññū hohi bhojane*.' Know your limit when eating. Venerable Sarīputta's advice to meditative monks is to refrain from eating the last four or five mouthfuls of food so as to drink enough water.

"*cattāro pañca ālope abhutvā udakaṁ pive*."

This gives ease and lightness for meditation. By means of various similes, the middle path regarding food has been always emphasized. The topic of food is so important that, the first of the ten questions asked at the higher ordination of novice Arahant Sopaka was based on food. You may have heard of it, perhaps.

"*sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā*."

Although this is subject to ridicule today, a deep understanding of this will lead to dejection, detachment and cessation which leads to *Nibbāna*.

In the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* we meet Venerable Sāriputta analyzing 'right view' in its diverse aspects, one after the other in response to the inquiry "Do you know yet another analysis?"

According to one mode of analysis, based on the pattern of the four truths, if a monk has a comprehensive understanding of nutriment, the arising of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment and lastly the path leading to the cessation of nutriment, that alone can arouse correct view in him, and practice the four truths regarding nutriment meaningfully. Nutriment is of four kinds, gross material food consumed in lumps, contact nutriment, nutriment of mental intentions and nutriment of consciousness. Understanding them at depth is to understand the misery associated with nutriment. The nature of craving underlying it represents the second Noble Truth. Cessation here stands for *Nibbāna*. The path is the middle path called '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*' or the restraint through wisdom, or in other words, partaking of food wisely reiterating its purpose as an object of meditation.

The last verse touched on a very profound aspect of the topic "*Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya – āsavānaṁ parikkhayā saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho – saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*".

Lets go through its meaning again. *Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya* – We partake food in order to maintain health. But the implication in this line is deeper than that. It refers not merely to physical health but enduring health which is *Nibbāna*.

"*ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya*" understanding good health well,

"*āsavānaṁ parikkhayā*" through the destruction of influxes,

"*saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho*" well established in the dhamma,

"*saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*" – *vedagu* refers to an Arahant endowed with three-fold knowledge, and not a Brahmin learned in the three Vedas.

"*saṁkhaṁ nopeti*" is not reckoned. An Arahant is 'Not reckoned' is a complicating concept which deserves some thought. Then let us discuss it at this point.

There is another *sutta* called the *Atthirāga Sutta* that mentions the four types of nutriments with a subtle simile. To begin with, the Buddha explains the four types of nutriments. Then three very significant words are introduced. If a disciple has passion (*rāga*) towards nutriment, pleasure (*nandi*) towards nutriment and craving (*taṇhā*) towards nutriment, its consequences are pointed out. If someone has passion, pleasure and craving towards, let us say, gross food which is made into lumps for eating, the consciousness gets established and strengthens itself. Many are interested in the secret of rebirth, an intricate subject. If passion, pleasure and craving are present towards nutriment, the consciousness towards nutriment gets established and strengthens. From then onwards the process of *Paṭicca Samuppada* is activated. Wherever consciousness gets established and grows, name-and-form activates itself there. Wherever name-and-form is established preparations are activated. Wherever preparations are established, there '*āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti*' another existence takes place. Existence gives rise to birth, decay, death. This is a very subtle point to grasp. This process is described in relation to gross food (*āhāra*), contact (*phassa*), mental intentions (*mano saṁcetanā*) as well as consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Attachment, pleasure or craving towards either of these four types of nutriments, leads to existence (*bhava*) with the consciousness well established there. It is followed by name-and-form (*nāma-rupa*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*) and then birth takes place.

The subtleness in this account is centered round the simile used by the Buddha "Monks, if a dyer or a painter were to paint on a smooth board or a wall or a cloth, using a rusty red, yellow or light red paint – now read the rest carefully – in the same way is created a figure of a male or a female, with details complete. (Now connect what was said). If at this point attachment, pleasure and craving are present towards nutriment, another birth is possible. Similar to a film reflected on a screen, the figure of the male or the female that seeks rebirth is registered on the foetus in the mother's womb which we call the muddy patch. The Buddha discusses this at depth as if he was painting a

picture. At this stage the three defilements passion, pleasure and craving (*rāga*, *nandi*, *taṇhā*) add a certain hue to the consciousness. That is what we call name-and-form. In brief it is a form in conformity with the name reflected on the consciousness. This is made explicit by the simile of the painter. This process takes place as long as the three-fold nutriments of consciousness ie passion, pleasure and craving last. A person excessively fond of food, may perhaps be born as a worm or a pig. It happens due to attachment to food. This illustrates the interrelatedness between consciousness and name-and-form.

The simile of the painter symbolizes defilements. The Buddha then deals with the opposite tendency with a deeper significance, which is a mystery to many.

"If one has no passion or pleasure or craving towards the four types of nutriments,?"

Here the Buddha brings out an amazing simile.

"Monks, there is a pavilion with windows on the north, south and east. When the sun rises, Monks, where will the sun's rays fall?

"On the western wall, Venerable Sir."

"If there was no wall on the west?"

"In that case, on the earth, Venerable Sir."

"If there was no earth?"

"On the water, if there was no earth."

"Well, if there was no water?"

"In that case, Venerable Sir, the sun's rays will not be established anywhere."

The word used here is '*appatiṭṭhita*' – 'not established'.

Can you see how deep its significance is.

"Venerable Sir, if the sun's rays do not fall on the wall or the earth or on the water, then it is not established" – '*appatiṭṭhita*'. We have earlier introduced the term '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – non-manifestative consciousness. In the absence of passion, pleasure or craving, consciousness is unable to establish itself. In explaining the meaning of *anidassana*, the simile of the painter suggests a mental state where there is nothing to be seen, to be revealed. We have explained this position based on a simile in the *Kakacūpama Sutta*. Here too, the question answer method is used.

"A man appears with some colour paints and a brush and declares that he would paint a picture in the sky" says the Buddha.

"Monks, do you think it is possible?"

“No Venerable Sir. It is not possible because ‘*ayaṁ hi bhante ākāso arūpī anidassano*’, this sky is formless, and is not capable of showing or revealing anything. This is a subtle point many cannot understand. We have discussed the significance of ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ in the discourses on *Nibbāna*.

Viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ – anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ

ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati

ettha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

ettha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati

viññāṇassa nirodhena – ettetaṁ uparujjhati

This verse remained an unresolved mystery for ever so long. Some interpreted it as a peculiar world. We have pointed out that the consciousness is there – *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* – but the released consciousness (*vimutta viññāṇa*) does not reflect name-and-form. Next, it discusses the characteristics of Name-and-form. ‘*Anantaṁ*’ – as in the simile where there was no place for the sun’s rays to fall. It is similar to that. *Anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ – ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati*. In this *viññāṇa* the four elements earth, water, fire and wind can have no footing. Why? Contemplation on the four elements have brought about disillusionment. If this idea is attached to the story of rebirth discussed earlier, it would appear as follows. If the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) does not clasp the four elements firmly, gives up attachment towards them, then “*ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati.*” – the four elements have no place in the consciousness.

On the other hand, if earth, water, fire and wind are present, the notion of long and short is present. Now think of its applicability to the painter. ‘*ettha dīghaṁ ca rassaṁ ca*’. Otherwise the concepts of ‘long-short’ would be inapplicable. *Subhāsubhaṁ* – beautiful or repulsive would also be inapplicable. As mentioned in the story, the figure of a man or woman is drawn with all the details. As long as *rāga*, *nandi* and *taṇhā* (passion, pleasure and craving) are present, the human figure acquires its relevant colours automatically. The paint here is lust. But in the consciousness that is released, called *anidassana viññāṇa*, Name-and-form does not reflect itself. The verse *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* is extremely deep in meaning as you can see. Finally it says

“*ettha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati*”.

Name-and-form is totally cut off here.

“*Viññāṇassa nirodhena*” – with the cessation of consciousness. The implication behind this phrase is not understood by many. This is not a reference to the prepared and

specially prepared consciousness. By consciousness we mean the consciousness that is accompanied by name-and-form. The worldlings do not know of the other consciousness which is identified as the 'ceased consciousness' – '*niruddha viññāṇa*'. How does it cease? It has no foundation or object. That is what is described as "*appatiṭṭhaṁ anārammanaṁ*" in talking of an Arahant's mind. you may have heard that the void state is referred to as "*animitta*" – signless, '*appatiṭṭhita*' – not established, '*suññata*' empty and void, devoid of self. It is this void state that is emphasized. In support of this position, here are two verses from the *Dhammapada*.

Yesaṁ sannicayo natthi – ye pariññāta bhojanā

suññato animitto ca – vimokkho yesa gocaro

ākāseva sakuntānaṁ – gati tesaṁ durannayā

This verse too is deep in meaning. '*Yesaṁ sannicayo natthi*' – they have no accumulated load, '*ye pariññāta bhojanā*' – understood the intricacies of nutriment, '*suññato animitto ca vimokkho yesa gocaro*' – whose pasture ground is void, signless, has the nature of release. Nutriment is not their prey. Realizing the void inherent in nutriment, the Arahants conduct themselves with ease in their signless essenceless pastures. The path they traverse is not visible.

"*Ākāseva sakuntānaṁ gati tesaṁ durannayā*" – Like the path taken by the birds in the sky, the course taken by the Arahant's mind is untraceable, due to its signless, unestablished nature. Deities and Brahmins venerating the Arahants say they are unable to trace the object of the mind of the Arahants who have attained the Arahant *phala samāpatti*. The main thing emphasized here is the void (*suññato*) and signless (*animitto*).

The verse that follows emphasizes the above facts.

Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā – āhāre ca anissito

suññato animitto ca – vimokkho yassa gocaro

ākāseva sakuntānaṁ – padaṁ tassa durannayaṁ

The qualities of the Arahant who has destroyed all influxes stated here are similar to those in the above verse. Those who have well comprehended the four types of nutriments will know that the path taken by the Arahant is untraceable because it is signless (*animitta*) and is undirected (*appaṇihita*). Now you understand why the Arahants are called "*saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*."

Those Arahants do not come into reckoning means, the worldlings do not recognize them. Once, the Brahmin youth Uttara, the pupil of Brahmin Brahmāyu curious to know how the Buddha partakes of food and in order to examine his conduct, followed him for

seven months like a shadow. The outcome of it, an amazing account of the Buddha's daily routine is given in the *Brahmāyu Sutta*. The Buddha partakes of food contemplating on the eight factors beginning with "*neva davāya, na madāya*".

The most amazing revelation is that the Buddha is "*rasa paṭisaṁvedī bhagavā no ca rasa rāga paṭisaṁvedī* ."

He is aware of taste. His taste buds are active but there is no lust for taste. The reason is that his consciousness is void (*suñña*) and signless (*animitta*).

Dear Listeners, you must clearly understand that according to these two amazing verses, understanding the significance of nutriment at its depth does not imply giving up nutriment altogether. It is the elimination of craving and lust for nutriment that is required. Unless one reaches this stage, the ordinary mind gets established somewhere by the force of craving, whether we expect it or not. A film is produced either in a mother's womb or elsewhere. Everyone gets stuck there.

"*Āyatiṁ punabbhavo*."

Another existence takes place here if consciousness and name-and-form go together. If the consciousness is removed, no name-and-form arises there. Even while the person is living, if the consciousness has released itself from the name-and-form, he does not seek a goal at death. The simile of the pavilion illustrated the mind that is signless. The sun's rays had no place to establish itself, whether on the wall or on the earth or on the water. Can you understand how deep the vision regarding nutriment is in the Dhamma? A correct understanding of nutriment, its arising, its cessation and the path to the cessation of nutriment corresponding to the Four Noble Truths, the final result would most certainly be Arahanthood. There is nothing more for him to accomplish. Dear listeners, considering the above facts, please treat this discourse as a subject for meditation. You must not put it away as too deep. It is true that the Dhamma is very deep. But if you train your mind on the lines of radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) the attainment of paths and fruits (*magga phala*) is not far away.

Today you have established yourselves on a higher *sīla* and disciplined your mind in meditation.

Not only the monks, but all those involved in meditation, contemplate on the nutriments. If this contemplation is correctly perfected, it certainly leads to paths and fruits in the Dhamma. I wish this discourse would be instrumental in the attainment of spiritual heights of *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant), *Sakadāgāmi* (Once-returner), *Anāgāmi* (Non-returner) and *Arahat* (Emancipation) and cross over this dreadful *Saṁsāra*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they rejoice in this discourse, and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!